

Approaching The Voice as Christians

As you know, the referendum on the Voice to Parliament is coming up on Saturday 14 October. As Christians, it's crucial that our faith inform our vote. That is, we don't just want to approach it as people, but as Christians, basing our vote on Christian principles.

But what are those principles? That's what this brief paper is for: to give us some basic, biblical principles on how to approach the Voice, whichever way we vote.

That last phrase - 'whichever way we vote' - is crucial. Christians will vote in different ways on this referendum, and that's OK. This paper won't tell you which way to vote. Rather, it will just outline some principles on *how* we should come to our decision, not *what* we should decide.

So, here are six principles to help guide our thinking on the Voice.

1. Watch your motives

The temptation in this debate will be to follow our negative emotions, voting either out of guilt or fear. But as Neville Naden, Indigenous Ministry Officer with Bush Church Aid says, 'Don't vote out of guilt or fear, but out of love and compassion.' So we should watch our motives as we vote.

2. The reality of disadvantage

We should also recognise that Indigenous Australians, as a whole, are worse off than other Australians, as a whole. On almost every measure of well-being - lifespan, health, education, rates of incarceration, etc. - Indigenous Australians are disadvantaged. And as Christians, we are called to care especially for the disadvantaged (Pr 31:8-9). So the question we should ask as we face this vote shouldn't be, 'Should we help Indigenous Australians?' - because we should - but, 'Will the Voice give them that help?'

3. Christians can vote either way

Christians will disagree on that question. Some will vote 'Yes,' and some will vote 'No,' and both can have good reasons for doing so. This is not a referendum with a clear-cut answer; rather, it is more of a 'balancing-with-wisdom' issue. As such, Christians should not infer things about other Christians who vote differently to them: that if they vote 'Yes,' they must be 'woke,' or if they vote 'No,' they must be racist. We also should not let how we vote divide us on other things, especially our gospel unity. Christians disagree on things all the time: this will just be one more of those things.

4. Take your vote seriously

Take your vote seriously. We are told to love our neighbours (Mk 12:31). This is a vote on how best to do that with one group of our neighbours. As such:

- a. **Don't just vote along party lines.** In this referendum, the major political parties have taken different sides. The Labor Party is campaigning for 'Yes.' The Liberal Party is campaigning for 'No.' So, the temptation will be just to vote along the same lines as the party you normally vote for in elections. But we should resist this temptation. It's lazy, and this is not an election. By all means, listen to what

both parties have to say, but then vote on what you think is the best argument, whether that happens to come from 'your' party or not.

- b. **Be clear what the referendum is and isn't asking.** There is misinformation out there on both sides. Go to reputable sources to find out what you're voting on, such as the Australian Electoral Commission: <https://www.aec.gov.au/referendums/learn/the-question.html>
- c. **Read about the specifically Christian arguments for both sides.** A great place to start is The Gospel Coalition Australia, which has two carefully argued cases for both the 'Yes' and 'No' cases:
 - 'Yes': <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-voice-a-christian-consideration/>
 - 'No': <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/human-equality-and-permanent-privilege-concerns-with-the-voice-proposal/>

5. Whatever happens on the Voice, Jesus is still Lord

Remember that, whatever happens on the Voice, Jesus is still Lord. Jesus is still coming back to restore all things, and nothing can stop that. As such:

- a. We can trust that God will one day end injustice and make all things right. While we long and work for justice now, we can be sure that God will make everything right in the end. God's ultimate solution to injustice doesn't rest on our efforts. This gives us confidence as we work for justice now: that it is a worthwhile task, but that God will also bring full justice in eternity.
- b. Given eternity, our biggest concern as Christians should still be the salvation of sinners, not the renovation of society (this goes for all social issues, not just the Voice). Again, this is not saying the Voice or other social issues are unimportant. It is just saying we are called to an even higher cause - sharing the gospel - and must always make this our first priority, while still caring about social issues.

6. Pray

This is God's world, and he knows what's best for it, so pray to him for wisdom on how to vote, and how best to care for people.