

Dear Class Member,

Last week, a pastor well known across the nation, Max Lucado, who makes it a practice to not speak about politics, broke with that practice to blog about the lack of decency in the current presidential race, particularly aiming his comments at Donald Trump.

The Wired Word reminds us that it does not endorse or oppose candidates and that it is a discussion guide, not an advocacy piece. The lesson is focused on when a Christian might feel compelled to speak out about the political process, especially when candidates proclaim themselves as Christians. So for our next class, we are going to look at the matter of who is called to define Christianity, and when.

The Wired Word has also included a second lesson that looks at the way the 1986 Challenger space shuttle disaster impacted engineers who were unable to prevent the accident. January 28 marked the 30-year anniversary of the tragedy, which has taken a toll on NASA employees ever since. That lesson explores how our faith can help us admit our human fallibility and failure, and find forgiveness when we are guilty of sin, and healing when we feel guilty even though we have not sinned. If you'd like us to use that lesson in class sometime, let me know.

If you wish to start thinking about our topic in advance, below is some introductory material.

The Wired Word invites us to contribute news story suggestions for upcoming lessons. If you have a story you'd like to suggest, post it to The Wired Word forum at <http://thewiredword.squarespace.com/>.



Max Lucado Calls for Decency in Presidential Race

The Wired Word for the Week of March 6, 2016

In the News

Max Lucado is a widely known pastor both in San Antonio where his church is and across America, thanks to his best-selling books -- 32 at last count. Because of his broad appeal, *Christianity Today*, in 2004, called him "America's Pastor." One factor that has contributed to that appeal has been his practice of staying out of politics. He has never endorsed or opposed a candidate and seldom commented on a political situation. But last week, he broke his political silence.

Lucado did that in a blog post (first link in the list below) on his personal website -- not his church's site -- where he lauded decency and observed that it isn't doing well in the presidential race. He then singled out Donald Trump as a prime offender, citing several examples.

Going on to explain why he had decided to break from his usual silence about politics, Lucado wrote, "I'm a pastor. I don't endorse candidates or place bumper stickers on my car. But I am protective of the Christian faith. If a public personality calls on Christ one day and calls someone a 'bimbo' the next, is something not awry? And to do so, not once, but repeatedly? Unrepentantly? Unapologetically? Can we not expect a tone that would set a good example for our children? We stand against bullying in schools. Shouldn't we do the same in presidential politics?"

Pastor Lucado did acknowledge concerns about decency standards of other candidates as well, but said, "When it comes to language, Mr. Trump is in a league of his own."

Applying the News Story

The Wired Word, in reporting this story, does not intend it as an endorsement of or opposition to any candidate. We are interested, however, in Lucado's statement that he is "protective of the Christian faith." After the content of his blog post was picked up and reported on by some major media outlets, *Christianity Today* interviewed Lucado about his decision to go public with his concerns (second link in the list below). Lucado acknowledged, "People don't attend church to hear my views on a presidential candidate."

He went on to explain, however, that "In this case, it's not so much a question about particular policies or strategies about government or even particular opinions. It's a case of public derision of people. It's belittling people publicly. It would be none of my business, I would have absolutely no right to speak up except that [Trump] repeatedly brandishes the Bible and calls himself a Christian."

Of course, for a politician to call himself or herself a Christian and behave in an ungodly manner is not unusual. The same criticism might be leveled at many other politicians. In fact, when we're being honest with ourselves, we are likely to see the same pattern in our own lives at times.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Decency for President. Max Lucado](#)

[Why Max Lucado Broke His Political Silence for Trump. Christianity Today](#)

The Big Questions

Here are some of the questions we will discuss in class:

1. Is the realm of politics so different from the rest of life that the usual practices of decorum, decency, sincerity and honesty shouldn't apply? Why, why not or to what extent?
2. How do you define Christianity?
3. Lucado said, "I would have absolutely no right to speak up except that [Trump] repeatedly brandishes the Bible and calls himself a Christian." Does your commitment to Christ and your

understanding of the Christian faith obligate you to speak up when a public figure self-identifies as a Christian and then frequently speaks or behaves in ways that you deem un-Christian? How much does your own politics agreeing or disagreeing with the public figure's policies affect your actions -- and in what ways?

4. Do pastors, who by their very position are spokespersons for Christianity, have a greater obligation to comment when public figures insist they are Christians but speak or behave in ways that seem to defy that claim? How can you do that without seeming to single out a candidate or party?

5. Might Christ *call* a Christian to speak out in such circumstances? How might you identify such a call in your own life?

6. Given that none of us who follow Jesus does so perfectly, where is the line where one's claim to be a Christian becomes not believable?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

We will look at selected verses from these Scripture texts. You may wish to read these in advance for background:

[Jeremiah 6:26-30](#)

[Romans 12:3-8](#)

[1 John 4:1-6](#)

[2 Timothy 1:8-14](#)

[Luke 6:43-45](#)

[James 3:1-12](#)

[1 Peter 1:13-25](#)

In class, we will talk about these passages and look for some insight into the big questions, as well as talk about other questions you may have about this topic. Please join us.