

Opposing Issue 1 from a Biblical Perspective

Message Outline by John Wootton

In the gospel of John chapter 17, verses 14-21, we find Jesus praying a prayer that inspires our prayers today:

¹⁴ I have given my disciples Your word. And the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take my disciples out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

¹⁶ They are not of the world even as I am not of the world.

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, so I sent them into the world.

¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

²⁰ "I do not pray for these disciples alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word,

²¹ that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You. May they also be one in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me.

Jesus was praying about His disciples then **and** His disciples now.

What was true of His disciples **then** is true of His disciples **now**:

Not **of** the world, but **sent into it**

Not **transformed by** the world, but **conforming** the world to Christ

Not **jaded** by the world, but **sacrificially loving it** like God so loved the world

If you are gathered here today in the name of Jesus your Savior, whatever your background or current role, be encouraged! You have the benefit of knowing that Jesus Himself is praying like this for **you**!

We are citizens and parents and neighbors and friends from a variety of backgrounds, but **united** in our assignment as disciples of Jesus who are sent into this world we call "Ohio."

What a freedom we enjoy today that the original disciples 2000 years ago could have only dreamed about ... the privilege to **boldly** declare **Ohio for Jesus** without persecution from our government leaders.

So, disciples of Christ, what would it look like for you and me to be the answer to Jesus' prayer, that we would be **so** unified, **so** aware that we are sent into the world but that we are not of it?

I submit to all of us to today that a key part of seeing that vision is understanding who the ultimate victor is.

His name is **Jesus**, God's only begotten Son, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords over Ohio, over every state in the union, and over every nation on the planet.

His perfection is not changed, His glory is not altered, His power is not diminished by any choice or activity of mankind.

And we, those whose deeply flawed lives have been graciously forgiven by God's unending love through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, are citizens of heaven and joint heirs with our victorious Savior for all eternity!

Understanding the unparalleled triumph of our God helps us look at the world He loves more properly, not with fear or resentment or anxiety, but with heavenly eyes of compassion and concern.

More specifically, because we are not of this world, we are looking at the troubling abortion and recreational marijuana issues on Ohio's November 7 ballot for what they are, but also for what they are not.

We are not of the world, so defeat or victory at ballot boxes will never affect our eternity as believers.

We are not of the world, so the defeat or victory of spiritually blind people will never alter our assignment to share and demonstrate the gospel.

We are not of the world, so nothing changes the fact that a unified Church will cause the world to know that God sent Jesus as their Savior.

We are not of the world, so we know legislative defeat or victory does not control anyone's salvation.

However, because we are sent into a world God loves, we view November 7 and beyond with heavenly eyes of compassion and Christlike concern.

Because we are sent into a world God loves, we are committed to seeing innocent life protected in the womb.

Be very aware: the reproductive freedom issue on the ballot will severely and savagely harm innocent life in the womb.

The issue is so loosely worded, on purpose, that it would make it possible for abortion and even partial-birth abortion all the way to the end of a full pregnancy if the abortion provider at the abortion clinic believes it is in the best interest of the woman's "health." That's right, it takes "exceptions for medical emergencies" out of our existing law and replaces it with the loose word "health" which has already been determined in multiple legal cases to include emotional, mental, or even financial health.

What do we think the vast majority of abortion providers at abortion clinics will decide to do in that situation?

It will also make it possible for young girls to obtain an abortion without the knowledge of their parents.

Please spend time talking and listening to God in prayer and then read the initiative carefully in its entirety along with multiple articles that explain what measures like this have done in other states. This is too extreme for Ohio!

So, because we are sent into a world that God loves, we take appropriate steps to respectfully engage with our government leaders and fellow citizens. We register. We vote. We even vote early and encourage others to do so. Our Assemblies of God position paper on the Sanctity of Life urges Christians to get involved with legislation affecting the unborn.

More importantly, that's also why we diligently model our Creator's plan for marriage and family and sexual relations and affirm His prescription as the preferred and healthiest path for all humanity.

That's why we are praying and laboring for men and women to embrace their own dignity as humans created in the image of God with a purposeful future, to honor the true worth of romantic partners and to see them as more than a means to sexual gratification, and to grasp the reality that an unborn child is a real human life and more than an inconvenient side effect.

Because we are sent into a world God loves, we are praying and laboring for Ohio young people and adults to have a greater understanding of the many viable, life-affirming options when faced with an unwanted pregnancy or when children or teens cannot receive the care they need and deserve, options such as adoption, foster care, pregnancy help, counseling, mentoring, coaching, and abundant resources from Christian and social agencies.

And, because we are sent into a world God loves, we are praying and laboring for Ohio believers and Christian leaders to partner as never before with statewide efforts to stem the tide of evil initiatives that, if adopted, will undoubtedly result in unspeakable pain and unthinkable death for innocent babies and devastating physical and emotional scarring of the women and men who opt for the violent, senseless, and avoidable taking of human life inside the womb.

Win or lose this November or next, we must see a God-inspired vision of winning **Ohio for Jesus**, an Ohio that is **forgiven, healed, and whole**.

Because we are not of the world, because we are sent into the world, we have the faith to believe for hearts and lives impacted by a prior choice to end a life in the womb to be forgiven, healed, and whole. The victims of abortion are never just the babies.

Because we are not of the world, we have the will to intercede for hearts and lives turned bitter by their cruel advocacy for legislation and initiatives that devalue the worth of every human life. They, too, can be completely forgiven, healed, and whole.

We recognize that Ohio society is broken, and that this brokenness is directly related to the effectiveness of the Church.

God said, "If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

The world will know that God sent Jesus when they see a Church behaving like it is supposed to – unified in Christ as we humbly pray, seeking God's face and turning from our own wicked ways.

The desire to advocate for abortion is a sign of Ohio's brokenness.

The desire to get high on marijuana and escape reality is a sign of brokenness.

But a broken society **never** means a hopeless society.

In Luke chapter 4, Jesus said the prophecy in Isaiah 61 was fulfilled in Him:

He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

(ILLUSTRATION: Broken bones often grow back to be stronger than they were before the break.)

Our four children are all out of the house now and on their own, but years ago, our oldest son played football for a high school here in Central Ohio.

That meant lots of trips to the football field, of course, but also a few to the doctor.

When the same forearm was broken a second time, we found ourselves taking him back to the same orthopedic surgeon who helped him several years earlier.

"We're back!"

Well, the first thing he did, of course, was to take an x-ray to see what kind of break he was dealing with. As he put the film up on the wall to examine it, it was easy to see the break ... and it was also easy to see the smile forming on the doctor's face. "Look at that," he said. With that, he pointed to another spot on my son's forearm where some extra calcification was visible. "That spot there is several inches down the arm from the current break.

That's where the **other** break was several years ago, and look how nicely that has healed."

Then he said something I'll never forget. And something that applies so directly to our broken society today.

"The original break healed so well, it made the arm stronger there and that's why today's break happened over here."

The place where there was brokenness was healed and stronger than ever before!

Would you join with me as we remember Jesus' prayer in John 17?

"As You sent Me into the world, so I send them into the world."

Like our Savior, we are sent into the world to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

We see Ohio forgiven, healed, and whole.

Only one state in the country, Ohio, has a Scripture as its motto, the words of our Savior: With God, all things are possible!

Why not here? Why not now?

This is not the time to fear or doubt. This is the time to believe!

This is not the time to hate or despise. This is the time to love!

This is not the time to focus on the church's shortcomings. The people of Jesus in Ohio have been praying and investing in young people and offering pregnancy help and sharing their time, talents, and treasure to show God's love to at-risk moms, dads, and children. And there's more of that to do after November 7, but now we have to be wise and focused on the ballot issue.

This is not the time to stay confused or ambivalent. The medical professionals at the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists have already weighed in on Ohio Issue 1: "Under current state law, physicians can already provide care for women with life-threatening pregnancy complications, including miscarriage and ectopic pregnancies. This proposed constitutional amendment was specifically crafted using vague language that appears benign, but which would make Ohio one of the most-extreme abortion states in the country."

This is the time to rally people, the majority of Ohioans, who do not believe it is humane, when you can already tell if a baby is a boy or girl, when she has a nervous system and sucks her thumb, when he has eyelashes and stretches his limbs, all of which happens at 4 months along, to snuff out that little girl or boy's life because they are just a few days away from viability.

This is not the time to keep quiet or to sit on the sidelines. This is the time to marry our faith and our works by getting people to register early, to encourage them to request their mail-in ballot, by voting early, by volunteering in call centers and going door-to-door, and by setting an appointment with Great Grandpa now to drive him to the polls in October, because you already know he will never trust the mailman with his ballot.

Doing all of this while sharing and showing God's love.

Ohio for Jesus. All things are possible.

Not because of our own righteousness, but because of the never-ending love of a heavenly Father who knows how to heal the broken, He really can deliver the captive, He gives sight to the blind, and sets free those who are oppressed!

Would you agree in prayer with me?