



Red Letter Christians: A Christian's Guide to Faith and Politics, a Citizen's Guide to Faith and Politics

Tony Campolo

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From Red Letter Christians: Challenging the popular image of Evangelicals is one of the purposes of this book. I want it to be known that there are millions of us who espouse an evangelical theology, but who reject being classified as part of the Religious Right. We don't want to make Jesus into a Republican. On the other hand, we want to say loud and clear that we don't want to make Jesus in a Democrat, either. Early twentieth-century playwright and social critic George Bernard Shaw once said that God created us in His image—and we decided to return the favor! Clearly there are those on the Religious Right who would make Jesus into a Republican and an incarnation of their political values. And on the other side of the aisle, there are those who would make Jesus into a Democrat who espouses their particular liberal agenda. But Jesus refuses to fit into any of our political ideologies. Transcending partisan politics, Jesus calls us to make judgments about social issues as best we can when we vote, and to do so in accord with our best understanding of God's will. In doing so, we are to avoid partisan politics that lead to unnecessary, unproductive and even dangerous divisions. At election time when you are asked, "Are you a Democrat or a Republican?" your answer should be, "Name the issue!" On any specific social or political issue, we must be ready and willing to work out which party and/or candidate best represents our convictions. This, of course, will make voting into a difficult decision-making process. But who said following Jesus was easy?

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Emily says

A little bit disappointing. I saw the author on the Colbert Report and he was compelling enough for me to actually buy this book. While he was up front about his own political bias in the introduction of this book, I felt it really came through in the topics he discussed. I think this may serve to dilute some of his messages to non-left-leaning evangelicals. The presentation of viewpoints was somewhat simplistic, but I did enjoy the concept behind this book - that Jesus is neither Republican nor Democrat and Christian voters should vote their faith, not their party.

Michael Laminack says

Campolo provides a fairly balanced survey of American political issues from his Christian perspective. This is a helpful resource for anyone evaluating their political inclinations in light of faith and current issues. I didn't (and shouldn't) agree with everything Campolo espouses, but his balanced and well-researched articulation of issues allows for some disagreement without violating his primary thesis. I highly recommend it.

Travis Alford says

Although it continues to be a struggle - and maybe it's supposed to be - this book and other writings by Tony Campolo literally saved my faith. In a time when "Christianity" is wrought with so much baggage - right-wing politics, prejudices, hatred, isolationism, and exclusivity - it's nice to know that there are those out there whose faith transcends these cultural trappings.

Mollie says

first heard of this book from one of my best friends, who happens to be Jewish. She had seen Tony Campolo on some TV show and thought the book sounded like something I would be interested in reading. Especially regarding his views on homosexuality. So, I reserved it from the library and have been reading it for the last, oh two months. Yes, it took me awhile to finish because I have a hard time getting through non-fiction.

With the elections drawing ever closer the importance of choosing a candidate that represents your views is crucial. In Red Letter Christians, Campolo covers a variety of issues from abortion, gay rights, and the environment; to education, immigration, and the federal budget, all the while challenging Christians to take an honest look at the stances that Evangelicals have taken on certain issues.

Visit my blog to read the review in it's entirety!

Darla says

If you are hoping for a book that is a non-partisan treatment of looking at the words of Jesus for help in voting decisions, this fails on both accounts. It is neither non-partisan nor does it look at the words of Jesus as a springboard for discussion. It is mainly a book of Campolo's political views. The words of Jesus are few and far between.

Melissa Oliver says

Although I found myself agreeing with most of what Campolo had to say, there seemed to be a lack of "red-letter" Scripture to back it up. I know the evidence is there, but I feel like he should have been much more specific with his Biblical references in order to persuade his readers.

John says

This book was recommended by President Bill Clinton & I had to read a liberal Christians understanding.

The book exposes the rant of the political left. Rarely did I agree with Campolo's view. Ironically when Campolo rebuked the defense spending and the stealing which happens there, he commends the development of the huge healthcare government sector, but he is naive enough to not admit or think of it overspending & stealing. That's the liberal mind justifying irrationality.

Thomas Bundy says

Worst book I have read in years. He starts by saying that "God is not a Republican OR a Democrat"...then he proceeds to explain how God is a Democrat on every issue except abortion and gays. And even on those issues, Republicans are so full of hate and discrimination, Jesus would be embarrassed to align himself with them. He says Republicans are hypocritical for being pro-life, pro-death penalty, and pro-war (whatever that is). Yet he fails to mention that following that logic, Dems must ALSO be hypocrites for having the opposite beliefs on each issue. Every time he states something that Bush is doing well, it is couched in the phrase, "to his credit..." The implication is that he is generally completely evil otherwise. No one ever says, "Mahatma Gandhi, TO HIS CREDIT, was always kind to his mother." Campolo is preaching to the choir. He is simply trying to give Democrats whose Christian values seem to be at odds with the Democrats', some room to still vote for people with Ds by their names. He was the "Spiritual Advisor" to Bill Clinton. That's like being the Safety Engineer on the on the Titanic. Was there a more overpaid job in America in the 90's?

Melissa says

I've read many books that deal with the radical nature of the Gospel and the politics of the Kingdom of God. What was unique about this book was that it went more in-depth into the contemporary political issues that

are affecting our life right now. Campolo doesn't tell you what to believe, or whose side to be on, or how to vote, but he details the issue and the various arguments on either side. As someone who doesn't understand all of the arguments, or even much about the political system in general, it was really great, practical information put in the context of the Gospel, specifically the Red Letters. Truly an amazing read.

Thefiremun says

This is a VERY "think outside the box" book for someone who's grown up in the Bible-belt. I sincerely appreciate Mr. Campolo and his convictions. I don't necessarily agree 100% with everything he says, but this book has definitely challenged me to cling to what the Scripture says instead of the popular belief of the Southern Baptist Church. For example, I can claim to be pro-life and cause a huge stir and ruccus about abortion. However, why does a typical "pro-lifer" believe so staunchly in the Death Penalty? Again, I really appreciate the challenge laid out to really examine my political and moral beliefs.

Timothy Mcpherson says

Tony Campolo brings about a fresh view on how Christians should interact in politics. The title of the book comes from actually reading and doing what Jesus says. Mr. Campolo makes the claim that too often people really do not do what Jesus says, like turning the other cheek. What would happen if our government actually operated in such a way? What would happen if more Christians sold their possessions and gave all they had to the poor? These are the questions that this book deals with. It is challenging and gives great examples of how Christians can be active in politics. The book is a little dated, having been written during the presidency of George W. Bush. I would also recommend his follow up book that TECO authored with Shane Claiborne, entitled "Red Letter Revolution."

Allison says

I agreed with this book in principle and was relieved to find my approach to politics supported. Unfortunately, I think the author relied a little too much on current events to frame his method. This made the book a bit lengthy as about a year later those current events aren't so current any more. I would have liked more scripture that we can reference when making our own decisions and maybe a quick summary of points at the end. That said I will probably buy this book to refer back to before the next election and I even recommended it to my dad.

Susan says

Tony Campolo is my favorite religionist (yes, that's a made up word, but it's the best word). I first heard him speak at a youth conference when I was in high school, and he inspired my first work trip to Haiti in the summer before my senior year in high school. I honestly think I owe my commitment to compassion, justice and equality significantly to the effect of that one speech.

So, needless to say, I really wanted this book to be good, and meaningful. And I wanted to find lots of points of agreement. And I did. His title of "Red Letter Christians" comes from his desire (along with others in his

circle) to rescue Christianity from the religious right, a title he absolutely refuses. His book focuses on the "red letters" of the Bible, and throws off all of the extra baggage that Christians have attached to Christianity over the centuries.

For my very conservative friends, I am sure you'll disagree with him and he'll make you mad, and you might even call him a heretic. Please read it. For my very anti-church friends, this book might give you a perspective on a different kind of Christianity than the kind that makes the news most of the time. Please read it. For those of you where I am, you'll hopefully find it as refreshing as I did to hear someone speak for us. Please read it.

Charlotte says

I look up to Tony Campolo less now than I did before I read this book. I appreciate the fact that he's trying to follow the red letters no matter what the world does, but he is woefully naive and, I believe, uninformed as to other sides of many issues. I don't believe his ideas are well thought out and, in several cases, are misapplications of the red letters. For example, he takes red letters that are meant for interpersonal relationships and applies them to geopolitical situations; they were not meant to be applied between nations. His answer to every problem seems to be that the government should do more to fix whatever the problem—nothing is anyone's personal responsibility. Before I read this book, I expected to come away from it more liberal; I just came away from it wishing Dr. Campolo had been better informed before he wrote this book.

Greg says

Campolo, as he often does, discusses the hot issues of the day and how Christians should respond to them. As indicated by the title, he looks at the issues through the lens of the words of Jesus (and not the so-called "religious right" or conservative point of view so prevalent among evangelicals.) Includes chapters on the environment, war, AIDS, gay rights, immigration, and various other government, economic and social issues. A pretty good read, but not really anything new here (at least for me.)
