

“Keeping Christianity Weird”
This Cultural Moment, Pt. 6
Joe Carter

Good morning Grace Hill. I’m excited to be with you this morning. I’m Joe Carter, I’m one of the pastors here at our church, but I’m not the pastor who usually preaches. Allan McCullough, our pastor of preaching, is down in the Dominican Republic this weekend visiting a missionary team we support.

Before he left, Allan had begun preaching an excellent series titled “King Jesus.” But sometimes we hit pause on whatever series we’re in to talk about something that is going on in our culture. We believe that if our society is talking about an issue and the Bible has something to say about it, then it’s something we should address.

I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but our society has been talking a lot about politics. So today I want to talk about Christians and politics. In fact, this is the first part of three sermons I hope to preach about how Christians should engage in politics. But I only preach every once every five or six months, so you’ll have to come back this fall for the second part and in the winter for part three.

Maybe you’re like me and the last thing you want to hear on a Sunday morning is a preacher telling you how to think about politics. But there are two ways my message today won’t be all that unusual. First, this is an extension of what Allan has been preaching on for the past few weeks. As Allan made clear, the claim that Jesus is our king is not a mere metaphor—it’s our reality. And so if Jesus is our king, then that is going to affect and shape our political views.

Second, all sermons are political. As Jonathan Leeman of Capitol Hill Baptist Church says, “Every week a preacher stands up to preach he makes a political speech.”

In every sermon a preacher is teaching the congregation to observe all that King Jesus commands. The preacher is telling us how we are to be shaped by the King’s laws and how we are to carry out the King’s mission. Every sermon we preach here at Grace Hill is a political sermon because every sermon we preach is about King Jesus.

I’m not much of a preacher, and you may not like my message, but I hope when you leave here today it’ll make you think more about how you can better serve our king.

Before we get started, though, let me pray for us.

[Dear heavenly Father, thank you for allowing us to come before you today. Help us as we search your Word, that we might hear what you have to say about how we should live in this world and engage within the realm of politics. Help us leave today with a better understanding of how we should present ourselves before you and before our unbelieving neighbors. We ask these things in your holy name. Amen]

Three years ago I was invited to be on a panel session at the tech festival South by Southwest. If you've never heard of South by Southwest it's one of those festivals for the young and hip. So I wasn't surprised they'd ask a young hipster like me to speak.

But what did surprise me was they had invited me to talk about God and the Singularity.

You've probably never even heard of the singularity. It's the idea that at a point in the near future, sometime within the next ten years, technological growth will become so rapid, so uncontrollable, and so irreversible that it will lead to advances we can barely imagine. One prime example is that many singulatarians believe we'll be able to upload our brains into computers, which will allow us to live forever. Some people who find this idea silly call this the "rapture of the nerds."

As I told the audience at the festival, what Christians have in common with them is that we both have some very weird beliefs. For example, some singulatarians believe they will be able to live forever because biotechnology will keep their bodies from dying, while Christians believe we will live forever because we will be getting resurrection bodies. They believe the world as we know it will end when we're able uploading our souls to the cloud, while we believe the world ends when the man who saved our souls comes out of the clouds.

But while the beliefs of both groups are weird, there are two main ways our beliefs differ. The first is that Christian beliefs are weird but true while their beliefs are just crazy. The second is that while their views are weird, such beliefs are still mostly acceptable to the world, while our beliefs are often considered so weirdly offensive that it provokes hatred from our neighbors.

This is an important point for understanding our relationship to the world. Society is not opposed to our beliefs because they are weird. What society finds offensive is that Christians hold religious beliefs that are what I'd call "biblically weird."

So what do I mean by weird? The Cambridge Dictionary defines "weird" as meaning "strange and different from anything natural or ordinary." And the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "suggesting something supernatural or unearthly." If we combine these definitions we get a good sense of what I mean by biblical weirdness. We are biblically weird when we are supernaturally infused to follow Christ in a way that makes us appear strange and different from the world in which we live.

Let me repeat that again: We are biblically weird when we are supernaturally infused to follow Christ in a way that makes us appear strange and different from the world in which we live.

The opposite of being biblically weird is to be worldly. In his wonderful short book "The Hole in Our Holiness," Kevin DeYoung says that worldliness is whatever makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange. Because we reject sin and embrace righteousness, the world sees us as biblically weird.

As I said earlier, our society wouldn't care if we were just weird. Many areas of our society embrace the weird. For example, the South by Southwest festival I went to is held every year in Austin, Texas. Nineteen years ago the Austin Business Alliance adopted the slogan for the city, "Keep Austin Weird." Since then other cities, like Portland, Louisville, and Indianapolis have adopted the slogan for themselves. And I think we should adopt that slogan too. I think as Bible-believing Christians we have an obligation to ourselves and our neighbors to "Keep Christianity Weird."

To live in this world, and to engage as political beings, we need to retain our biblical weirdness. We need to keep Christianity weird. And we need to do it knowing it's the kind of weird the world won't accept.

So where in the Bible do we find a call to be weird? We see it sprinkled throughout the book of first Peter. Unfortunately, while the book is short—it's only about 1700 words long—we don't have time to read the whole thing right now. While I'm just going to pick out a few select verses to focus on, I hope you'll take some time this week to read the whole letter. I want you to look at the context and make sure that I what I'm telling you today is sound doctrine.

This morning I want to show how Peter makes the case for why we, as Christians living in America in the twenty-first century, need to keep Christianity biblically weird. In doing so I'm going to highlight three principles that affect how we engage in politics.

The first principle is that we must stay biblically weird to keep from being shaped by society.

Earlier, Justin read a passage from chapter four of Peter's letter. In that passage Peter points out that because of Christ we "do not live the rest of [our] earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God." We've already done our time living in debauchery and lust and drunkenness and idolatry. Then Peter says, "They [the non-believers] are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

Notice how Peter says the non-believers are going to react to us. They will be *surprised* that we do not join them and they will *heap abuse* on us.

The word here for "surprised" in the Greek is sometimes translated as "strange things." So Peter is saying they think it is *strange* that you do not join them. We have become strangers to them because in submitting to Jesus we have become strange.

A few verses later, in verse 12, Peter says, "Dear friends, do not be *surprised* at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something *strange* were happening to you." Commenting on this verse John Piper says we might paraphrase this by saying: "Don't think it strange when they think you are strange."

Because you don't join in with what the world is doing you're going to be treated as a weirdo. And what happens to weirdoes who stand out? As we all learn in high school they get abuse heaped on them. The word translated here as "heap abuse" is *blasphemeo* — from which we get our English word *blaspheme*. The Greek dictionary defines the word as to slander, revile, or defame.

The non-believers are going to heap abuse on you because they are trying to pressure you into being like them. In other words, they're applying peer pressure.

All people—whether children, teens, or adults—are subjected to peer pressure, in both positive and negative ways. The influence of our peer groups leads us to conform to social norms, and ultimately helps us develop our sense of self and our place in society.

For us as Christians peer pressure comes from two broad groups. We feel the pressure to conform from our fellow believers, those who belong to God's Kingdom, and we feel pressure to conform by those outside of God's Kingdom, to the non-believers and those who claim to be Christian but do not submit to God's Word.

But it's not just us: Unbelievers sometimes feel this same pressure to conform to the world or to the church—and it makes them uneasy. A good example is found in a song called "Church Pew or Barstool" by the country singer Jason Aldean. In the song Aldean complains about how he's stuck in a "church pew or bar stool kind of town." He says, "There's only two means of salvation around here that seem to work, Whiskey or the Bible, a shot glass or revival." He adds that "When you don't seem to run on either side of the fence/People act like you don't make sense." Later in the song he says he needs to escape to a "place where there is no lines."

The unspoken idea in Aldean's song is that if he can only escape the peer pressure of a small town—where the only choice is the bar or a church—he can find himself. He can discover who he is and find his own identity. He can *choose* to be himself.

What he doesn't seem to understand is that no one gets to choose to be themselves. As Tim Keller says, we only get to choose to be the selves our culture tells us we may be.

Keller gives the example of two young men from very different times and cultures. The first is an Anglo-Saxon warrior in Britain in the ninth century AD. The second is young man living in modern-day Manhattan. Both young men have two equally strong inner impulses and feelings. They both feel aggression and they both feel same-sex attraction. Because the young warrior lives in a culture that values aggression and violence, he will say to himself, "That's me! That's who I am! I will express that." And because he lives in a culture that opposes homosexuality, he'll also look at his same-sex attraction and say, "That's not me. That's now who I am! I will control and suppress that impulse."

For the young New Yorker, though, it will be just the opposite. He will look at the aggression and impulse to be violent and think, "This is not who I want to be," and so

he'll seek deliverance in therapy and anger-management programs. He'll look at his sexual desires, though, and say, "That's who I am. My identity is that I'm a gay man."

Now if you asked each of those men, they would tell you they freely chose which identity to embrace. But that's not true at all. As Keller says, we do not get our identity simply from within. Rather, we *receive* some interpretive moral grid, we lay it down over our various feelings and impulses, and then we sift them through it to find what we're allowed to be. This grid helps us decide which feelings are our so-called "true selves" and that should be expressed and which feeling culture says *should not* be expressed.

Every person on earth is being shaped in this way. *You* are being shaped in this way. How you see yourself, how you engage with other people—these are shaped by a moral framework that you didn't create.

The question is whether you will be primarily shaped by the Bible and those committed to living according to God's Word, or whether you will be shaped mostly by the culture and those who are in rebellion against God.

And that brings us to our second principle. You don't get to decide how you are biblically weird. Biblical weirdness is constrained by two factors—the Word of God and the attitude of society. You can be weird without being biblical, and you can be biblical without being weird. And while what is biblical doesn't change, what is considered weird by society will change over time.

For example, there are more people in slavery today than in any time in human history. Of course, to oppose such slavery is biblical. We should love our neighbor by trying to free people from sex trafficking or labor trafficking. To do that is biblical; but it's no longer weird.

Two hundred years ago, when Christians first opposed slavery, many of their fellow Americans considered it strange, and even perverse. Today, though, the biblical view has so transformed culture that it's no longer weird—much less biblically weird—to oppose slavery. In the year 1800, slavery was legal in 193 countries. Today it is legal in only three. On that issue culture progressed in a way that aligned with God's Word primarily because Christians had the courage to be biblically weird and to stand for what God says is right.

But society can also regress from a *more* biblical view to a *less* biblical view. For instance, the idea that sex was to be confined to one man and one woman within the bounds of marriage was considered "normal" for most of American history. Even if it was not always practiced it was still considered the norm and standard for sexual activity. The influence of biblically weird Christians helped to transform societies views about sex. There was a shift that occurred after the first century AD, when Peter was making his warning not to be involved in pagan orgies, that lasted until about the 1960s. During that period, most of Western society began to consider it immoral to have sex outside of marriage.

Then the Sexual Revolution came and shifted society back to the pagan view. The result is that the worship of sex has become the dominant form of idolatry in America. The Sexual Revolution has completely transformed politics to the point where sex began creating new human rights.

The first new right ushered in during the sexual revolution was the “right to privacy.” In 1965, the Supreme Court ruled in *Griswold v. Connecticut* that married couples have a right to use contraceptives. That sounds reasonable enough, but then the right continued to expand over the next fifty years.

In 1972, the Court used the logic of *Griswold* to extend the right of birth control to unmarried couples, and in 1977 expanded it once again to include minors who were at least 16 years of age. The Court also used the reasoning in *Griswold* to declare a right to abortion in 1973, a right to sodomy in 1983, and a right to same-sex marriage in 2015.

Now I suspect some of you are thinking, “What’s wrong with that?” We’re so accustomed to following the logic of the Sexual Revolution that we think it would be weird for any of that to be illegal. We think it’s reasonable because it’s all we’ve ever known. We think it’s reasonable because almost every person in this room was born *after* the Sexual Revolution began.

Grace Hill is young church full of young people. Here at Grace Hill, I’m not just an elder I’m practically one of the elderly. And even though I’m old, even I haven’t lived in an era before the age of sexual idolatry. I was born in 1969, on the last day of Woodstock. By then the Sexual Revolution was well underway. Few of us here today even know what it’s like to live at time when our society considered fornication to be weird.

We Christians don’t even notice how much we’ve been shaped by the idolatry of sex until things shift just a bit further beyond what the society we grew up in considered normal. My generation grew up at a time when it was normal for sex to be detached from marriage. Yet we were shocked when homosexuality became so normal that it redefined the meaning of marriage. Similarly, many people who grew up thinking homosexual behavior was normal were shocked by the rapid acceptance of transgenderism. Our kids, though, will grow up in a time when transgenderism is normal. So what will surprise them? What comes next?

Unfortunately, the longer Christians are influenced by culture, the more it shapes us. More than a third of evangelicals now think that homosexuality is not a sin, and almost 60 percent of Christians think same-sex marriage should be legal. Even fewer would say that their heterosexual friends were doing anything wrong by having sex outside the bounds of marriage. And very few younger Christians have qualms about living with a sexual partner before marriage.

Where do they get those views? It’s certainly not from God. Instead, they disregard what God has to say and listen instead to the idol of sex.

I believe the idolatry of sex by Christians takes two general forms. The first group simply doesn't have the courage to be biblically weird. If what the Bible teaches about sex conflicts with the secular culture, they'll disregard the Bible and align with society.

The second group still recognizes the authority of God's Word, or at least still believes in the general concept of "sin." They will freely admit that fornication is a sin and that same-sex relationships are excluded by Jesus' clear and concise definition of marriage.

Yet despite this understanding they still choose to support laws that expand sexual idolatry. They often do this because they themselves have made an idol of individualism. Today, they support laws that legalize same-sex marriage and oppose laws that would outlaw pornography. Tomorrow, they'll be the ones who support legalized prostitution and polygamous marriage. They have replaced Jesus' commandment to love your neighbor as yourself with the guiding motto of the neopagan religion of Wicca, that says, "Do what you will, so long as it harms none."

When we endorse laws based solely on the secular conception of individualism, we are doing the very opposite of what Jesus called us to do: We are hating our neighbors. You do not love your neighbor by encouraging them to engage in actions that invoke God's wrath. As Christians we may be required to *tolerate* ungodly behavior, but the moment we begin to *endorse* that type of behavior then we too have become suppressers of the truth. You cannot love your neighbor and want to see them excluded from the kingdom of God.

You also don't get to decide which parts of the Bible you are comfortable applying to your political views and which you don't. You can't say that you're going to apply your biblical beliefs when it comes to caring for the environment or serving the poor or protecting the unborn and then turn around and defer to the world's standard on issues such as sexuality. It doesn't work that way. If you love you neighbor then you will seek their good in all areas of life.

While society decides which of your biblical views are weird, *all* your social and political views must be shaped first and foremost by the Bible and rooted in biblical principles. This doesn't mean, of course, that Christians will always agree on application or implementation. For instance, we may agree that we have a duty to help the poor without agreeing on the best way to do that. But on every political issue, our foundation and our starting point must always be God's Word and our love for our neighbor.

How, though, do we make a distinction in the public square between when we are *endorsing* sinful behavior and when we are merely *tolerating* it.

Here's a two-part standard I think every Christian should apply to political issues. First, Christians must support what they justifiably believe will promote the common good. If there are times when we can't do that, then we should abstain from engaging in political

activity. And second, Christians must engage in politics in a way that does not bring dishonor to the name of Jesus

That brings us to our third and final principle: Being biblically weird means we do not dishonor the name of Jesus.

We shouldn't care too much about what the world says about us. But we should care deeply about when the world is slandering Jesus because we are dishonoring his name. Peter tells us how we avoid that from happening:

For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

Peter warned us earlier that because we are weird, because we do not live as the pagans do, that people will "heap abuse" on us. They are going to blaspheme us. They are going to revile us. But before they can revile Jesus because of us we are going to shut their mouths. And how are we going to silence their ignorant talk? We do that by doing good. Peter is saying that the pagans will make claims about us that they won't be able to back it up because we are doing God's will by doing good.

In the next verse Peter also lays out some conditions for how we are to do good and live as exiles:

Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

As Peter says, we *must not use* our freedom as a cover-up for evil. One of the freedoms you have as a Christian and as an American is the freedom to participate in elections. You have the freedom to cast a vote for a political candidate who will represent you or enforce the laws on your behalf. When you're in the voting booth no one but you can decide how you vote. But the same God who, as Jesus said, will hold you accountable for every careless word you speak, will hold you accountable for the way you vote.

Peter also says that we are God's slaves. Everything you have, including that ballot, belongs to God. Are you casting your vote based on the standards laid out by God or are using the standards set by the secular world?

You may have been nodding in agreement when I said that Christians shouldn't be shaped by society. You may have even agreed about how Christians love our neighbors by upholding the Biblical standard on sexual ethics. But now we're going to consider what being biblically weird means for voting for and supporting politicians—and it's gonna get uncomfortable.

The number of ways that we can do good is literally uncountable, but since I only have time to focus on one I want to highlight how we do good by being truth-tellers. As Peter

might say, by being truth-tellers we shut the mouth of non-believers who would slander the name of Jesus. Non-believers should never be able to say that Christians are liars, that we are deceptive people, or that we are oath-breakers.

God's attitude about lying is all over the Bible, but I'll just give you a few examples.

Leviticus 19:11, "Do not lie. "Do not deceive one another."

Psalm 119:163, "I hate and detest falsehood."

Proverbs 12:22, "The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy."

Proverbs 13:5, "The righteous hate what is false."

Colossians 3:9, "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices."

You're probably saying to yourself, we got it preacher, God hates lying, move on, we know this already.

But do we? I'm not sure we do. We say we're committed to the truth and to being truth-tellers and yet we certainly aren't consistent about it.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Imagine you go to a car mechanic who says she's a fellow Christian. You hire her to change the brakes on your car but find out she lied to you—she never replaced the faulty brakes with new ones. You later find out she does this all the time, and that she has a reputation for lying. Would you hire her to fix your car again? Would you trust the safety of your family to her work?

Or imagine you tell a Christian baker your child is allergic to gluten and peanuts and they lie about their bread they sold you being gluten- and peanut-free. Or imagine you go to a Christian doctor for surgery and they lied about the procedure they performed. Imagine just about any occupation where someone tells you they are a fellow Christians, they repeatedly lie to your face, and yet you keep on trusting them to do their job.

Can you think of any jobs like that? I can think of only one: the job of politician.

What do we do when we hear a politician tell us that they're a Christian and yet they repeatedly lie to us. Most of the time we just shrug. Politicians lie, that's what they do, right? What are ya gonna do?

Well, I'll tell you what you *should* do. If someone claims to be a Christian then you hold them to the same standard you do all other Christians. You should do to the Christian politician who lies to you what you'd do to the mechanic and the baker and the doctor who lied to you. You don't use their services. You don't support them. You don't give them your trust.

Does that mean you shouldn't vote for a Christian politician that habitually lies?

Let me put the question back on you. Does it promote the common good to elect politicians who habitually lie? Does it bring dishonor to the name of Jesus to elect people who habitually lie and yet claim to be citizens of Christ's Kingdom?

I've looked through the whole Bible and I can assure you there is no exemption for Christian politicians when it comes to lying. In fact, there is not a single principle, rule, law, or command in the Bible that is applicable to Christians for which Christian politicians get a pass. There is no verse that says just because a Christian is running for a secular office that they are exempt from the ethical standards of being a disciple.

God expects all Christians—including politicians who claim they are Christians—to follow the standard he's set before us in his Word.

For example, God says to respect the human life he's created: He doesn't give politicians a pass to support abortion or murder civilians in an unjust war. God says to honor marriage: He doesn't give politicians a pass to support same-sex marriage or to cheat on their wives with porn stars. God says to tell the truth: He doesn't give politicians a pass to lie because they might not get elected if they told the truth.

If a politician claims to be a follower of Christ then they're to be judged by the same standard that we judge all Christians. If they sin, we lovingly rebuke them. If they confess, we forgive. If they repent, we seek restoration. But if we're committed to following Christ—if we're committed to being biblically weird—we won't overlook their sin, even it advances our preferred political causes.

We also won't be so quick to make excuses for why we overlook such sin. I first became eligible to vote in 1987 and in every election since then I've been told that if I don't support a particular politician or political party that our country is doomed.

First of all, if you think the outcome of any single election determines the outcome of our country's future, you need a higher view of God's sovereignty. And second, once you go down that road the compromises you make will never end.

For most of my life I believed that when it came to politics it was acceptable for Christians to compromise our values and principles for the greater good. I would have been the first to say that the "perfect is enemy of the good." And I still believe that—though not in the way I used to. I still believe in the idea of proximate justice.

Proximate justice is that idea that something is better than nothing. It allows us to make peace with some justice, some mercy, all the while realizing that it will only be in the new heaven and new earth that we find all our longings finally fulfilled.

But while I still believe in proximate justice, I no longer use it, as Peter says, "as a cover-up for evil." I no longer believe proximate justice can justify every political decision I want to make.

Is the political party I support unjust? Well, the other party is worse.
Does the politician I support lack integrity? Well, the other candidate is worse.

Head down that path and you'll find you can justify anything. What started out as a commitment to proximate justice soon becomes an exercise in the ends justifying the means.

Had I been choosing between two pagan politicians or two political parties dominated by paganism, I might have been justified in making such compromises. But in almost every case I was justifying supporting people who *claimed* to be Christians in political parties that *claim* to be dominated by believers. And yet time and time again I was making excuses to support politicians who claim their first allegiance is to the Kingdom of God and yet were bringing shame upon the name of Jesus.

What sort of message does it send when we say you can follow Christ and support the legalized slaughter of unborn children. What sort of message does it send when we say a Christian can brag about sexually assaulting women and still be qualified to hold the most powerful job on earth?

Why do we support politicians who claim to be Christians and yet give the world reason to think we are all liars and hypocrites? If our first and true allegiance is to King Jesus, then why aren't we more concerned about how his name is being sullied? And if we're more concerned about politics than we are about the reputation of Jesus then we have our priorities out of whack.

Let me make myself clear: I'm not trying to bind your conscience to my own perspective on politics. I'm simply asking you to search the Scripture and ask yourself what is truly shaping your views and engagement on politics. Are they based on the Bible or are you more shaped by American culture? And are you making political decisions that advance your cause but do so in a way that brings shame to our King?

The answers to those questions make engaging in politics more difficult. And there is much more that needs to be said. As I mentioned earlier, this is merely the first of three sermons. In future sermons we'll consider how we can promote the common good without losing our souls.

But that's in the future. Right now I have to deal with the fallout that comes from what I just preached.

Some of you are probably annoyed, frustrated, or even angry about something I've said today. I get that. You might even be justified in your reaction. But as you leave here today I want you to prayerfully consider if what I've said is true. Search the Scriptures and see how Jesus engages with politics. And then ask yourself if you are following the way of our King.

If you think Jesus already supports the *exact same* policies and politicians you *already*

support and that there is nothing you need to change, you might be deceiving yourself. I implore you to consider how being biblically weird affects how you engage in politics. If you can't think of any way your engagement differs from the average non-Christian in America, then you may not be weird enough.

Remember at the beginning when I said you might not like message. Some of you probably thought I was kidding. What I knew at the start and that you're realizing now is that the call to keep Christianity weird is a message that is not just despised by the world. It's a message that is also unpopular even inside the church.

To be honest, I'd like to be popular. I like being liked. I'm not eager to watch people avoid me after church so they don't have to tell me how much they hated this sermon. That ain't gonna be fun.

And if there was a way I could avoid all this biblical weirdness stuff I probably would. But I can't. And the reason why I can't is because we have to be committed to being biblically weird. We have to be biblically weird because it's the only way to be faithful to Christ—and the only way to find eternal life.

Last Sunday I taught the upper elementary class for GHC Kids. I had asked them to submit some "tough questions" that'd I research and answer for them. One of my favorite questions they submitted was, "Why did some people not believe Jesus when he saved millions of people and there's proof?"

That's a tough question that requires a detailed response. But the short answer is that they didn't believe Jesus because believing in Jesus is hard. As the writer Flannery O'Connor once said, "What people don't realize is how much religion costs. They think faith is a big electric blanket, when of course it is the cross. It is much harder to believe than not to believe."

To believe in Jesus—to really believe, not just give some mental assent to the idea of Jesus—requires taking up our cross and following him. At worst it means we may have to suffer and die because of our commitment to King Jesus. At best it means that we have to live like weirdoes, always being out of sync with the rest of society and doing things that make other people despise us.

Being biblically weird is hard. It's always been hard. It wasn't any easier when Jesus walked among us. The sixth chapter of John tells us that many of Jesus's early disciples were put off by the "hard teaching" and asked, "Who can accept it?"

Verse 66 says that, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." Jesus then turned and asked his original twelve disciples, "You do not want to leave too, do you?"

And Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

Believing in Jesus is hard. Being a weirdo for Jesus is harder. But what choice do we have? Where else are we going to go? Only King Jesus—the Holy One of God—has the words of eternal life. So we can either join the other weirdoes and follow our King into heaven or we can tag along with all the normal people who are on the path to hell.

Let us pray.

[Father, help us to understand that following you is going to make us outcasts and pariahs within our own nation. Give us the courage to stay true to your Word, even when it becomes hard and politically unpopular. Give us the wisdom to be more concerned about the eternal politics of your kingdom than we are with the temporal politics of America. Help us find ways to promote the common good and yet never let that be an excuse for us to use our freedom as a cover-up for evil. Help us to love our neighbors, Father, but help us to love King Jesus even more. In your holy name we pray. Amen.]