A POLITICALLY COMPROMISED CHURCH

Church leaders became increasingly involved in national politics during the Roman emperor Constantine’s reign (A.D. 306–337). Bishops enjoyed luxurious banquets in the imperial palaces, where they lavished praise and flattery upon Constantine for the favors he granted them. Constantine passed laws that favored the church, exempted clergy from taxes, appointed Christians to powerful positions in the empire, and used state revenue to pay for new church buildings. The church’s ambitions for wealth and worldly power only exposed its own moral bankruptcy and lack of spiritual power. Compromises with pagan culture resulted in a church that hid many forms of paganism under the flag of Christianity.

The bishops led public prayers for Constantine’s military and political success, speaking of him as the church’s savior and of his rival, Licinius, as their archenemy. They feared that Licinius might revive old persecutions against the church, and in their hostility against him, their devotion to Constantine became fanatical. One historian described it this way: “It was the aim of Constantine to make theology a branch of politics; it was the hope of every bishop in the empire to make politics a branch of theology” (John William Draper, *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* [1863], 311). A new version of Christianity resulted from this strange marriage between theology and politics—one that eventually grew into religious tyranny. This week’s lesson will explore scriptural principles that should have stopped the church from ever combining theology and politics. We must continue to heed these warnings today.
Write out Luke 5:27–39 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out verses 27–32. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the passage.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/ phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How should the way Jesus' chose His disciples shape the way we choose our leaders?

How can we ensure our churches are not mired in politics and national hostilities?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL02-3
Political Hopes Dashed

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?

What questions emerge after studying this lesson? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

What political ambitions do we as believers need to abandon to accomplish our mission?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL02-4
What relationship do the following verses have with Luke 5:27–39?

Matthew 6:33  
Matthew 20:20–23  
John 18:36, 37  
Galatians 3:26–29  
Philippians 3:20  
Hebrews 11:13–16

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with the primary passage?

Meditate on the primary passage again and look for where Jesus is.

What is Jesus saying to you through the text of the week?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Why does Jesus require us to do more than just incorporate a few good ideas into our old thinking?

Prayer Response:
inSight

Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, what are some personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are some practical applications you must make in your school, family, workplace, and church life?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/RL02-7
Political Hopes Dashed

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How can the church stay united despite the many political differences amongst its members?

Why do you think Jesus didn’t stand up for the Jews’ religious liberty and deal with Rome’s flagrant overreach of power?

In what ways might the church today be in danger of having misaligned political hopes?

How can we make sure we prioritize the right things?

Do you think national pride and bigotry are significant temptations for believers today? Why or why not?

How can the church do a better job of reaching people from all political backgrounds the way Jesus did?

What are some ways you can start to overcome political strife at family gatherings and with friends?