



Sample Voting Rights Sabbath Messages

Democracy: a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.



"The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Strength to Love

People of faith have been intimately involved in shaping American democracy. From colonial times to the present, faith leaders have articulated the values and principles that distinguish the United States from other nations. They have held political leaders who failed to live up to our highest ideals accountable. The ability of citizens to vote is a fundamental right enshrined in our Constitution. In our democratic experiment, the principle of "one person, one vote" is sacrosanct. The ballot box allows the governed to raise their voice to affirm or reject the policies of our representative government. Efforts to disenfranchise any voter and silence that voice undermine the very foundation of our democracy.

Faith leaders of our generation are again being called on to protect the rights of Americans to vote their consciences free from intimidation or suppression. This segment offers a few suggestions on crafting messages that highlight the universal principle of fairness in a way that parallels our current struggle to protect the vote.

Leviticus 19:15 (NIV) - JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

The Message:

- "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly."
- This Book outlines how a holy God would set up His earthly kingdom.
- As Israel camped at Mount Sinai, God gave Moses clear direction for how their government should be organized.
- Holiness required neighbors to be treated equally.

How the Message Relates to Voting Rights Today:

- Justice also demanded fairness to all, regardless of their position in society.
- In a democracy, the mantra of one person, one vote is a manifestation of that same fundamental principle of equality and justice.
- An updated Voting Rights Act must provide the tools needed to stop discrimination against any group whether it be on age, race, gender, language, or socio-economic grounds.
- The tools in the updated VRA include remedies to address current discrimination when it occurs, requirements for transparent public notices about potential voting changes, and the ability to review voting changes in places with a recent history of discrimination.

Hosea 4:6b (NIV)– KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION

The Message:

- “...my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.”
- The prophet Hosea delivers God’s indictment of a society that had turned its back on their covenant with Him.
- God’s own people – “my people” – failed to gain knowledge about His will, as revealed through the prophet’s messages, and suffered dramatic consequences as a result.

How the Message Relates to Voting Rights Today:

- A key provision of the Voting Rights Act was struck down after almost half a century. Like the people in Hosea, we must educate ourselves and our communities about the issue of voting rights.
- The severe consequences of failing to educate people about ways to protect their fundamental right would have far-reaching implications for ours and future generations.

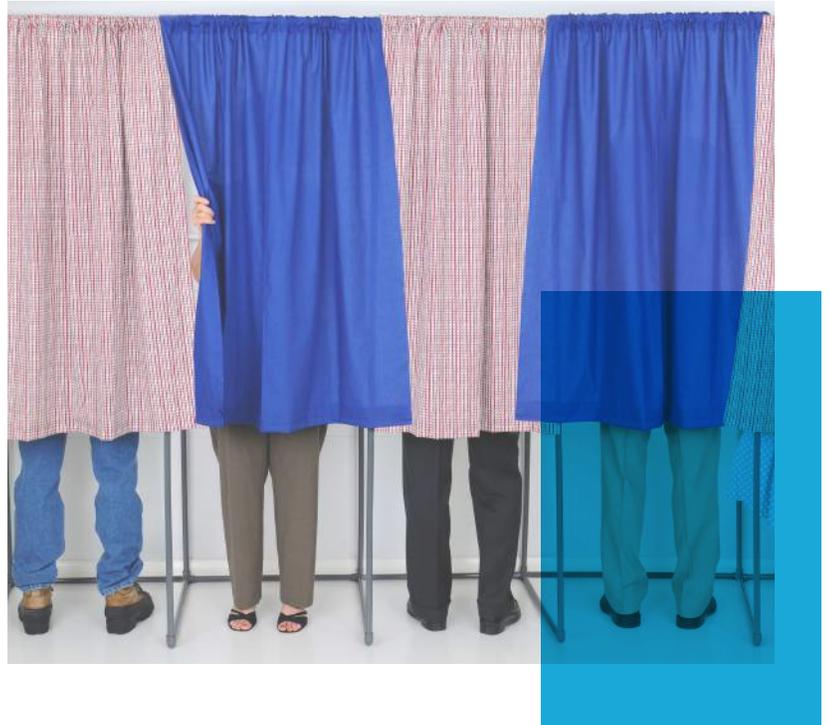
Ecclesiastes 5:8 (NIV)– ACCOUNTABILITY

The Message:

- “If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still.”

How the Message Relates to Voting Rights Today:

- Those in authority should act fairly since they too will be judged by a higher authority.
- Oppressing a vulnerable group or refusing to recognize their rights arrests God’s attention because it is diametric to His will for humankind.
- Our history is filled with examples of misguided and prejudiced efforts to deny the rights of disadvantaged groups. Today



- these efforts to prevent voters from fully participating in our democracy, are usually disguised as legitimate, but are just as insidious as tactics in the past. For example, the outcry for new and more restrictive voter ID laws have been proven to NOT be an effective strategy for preventing voter fraud, which is nearly non-existent, but rather have made it much more difficult for the most vulnerable sectors of our population – the elderly, people with disabilities, students, minorities, and low-income citizens – to exercise their right to vote.
- Those who acknowledge God yet work at cross-purposes to His demand for fairness by oppressing others for political gain must be held accountable.
 - Given the significant challenges that exist post *Shelby*, we have a responsibility to protect voting rights and fundamental notions of fairness.
 - God certainly watches over those officials who abuse their authority and in the end will hold them to account.

Matthew 5: 1- 11 (NIV), Sermon on the Mount – BLESSED ARE THE MEEK AND RIGHTEOUS

The Message:

- *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled... Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

How the Message Relates to Voting Rights Today:

- Voting rights work today is hard. The media may call us names. Those who falsely claim to be protecting “voting integrity” by making it harder to vote may question our love of God and country. Registering voters, driving residents to the DMV to get photo ID may require us to sacrifice time from leisure activities. Yet, Jesus tells us “blessed are those who thirst for righteousness” and “blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.” This is blessed work.

James 2:1-4 (NIV)– EQUAL TREATMENT

The Message:

- *“My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothing, and a poor man in filthy old clothing comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothing and say, “Here’s a good seat for you but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor” by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”*

How the Message Relates to Voting Rights Today:

- Voting changes today—such as requiring proof of citizenship or photo ID when registering to vote—disproportionately affect minorities, the elderly and young, and those economically disadvantaged and urban residents who may not have a driver’s license. These overly burdensome requirements make it more difficult for certain sectors of society to vote, mainly those who are most marginalized. In effect, these laws are directly at odds with scripture, as they make a distinction among those who should and should not vote, as they show partiality towards those of means and make it difficult for those without means to participate in the franchise. In sum, these overly restrictive ID laws inherently have bias against what the scripture here would call the “poor man” in favor of “the one with the fine clothes.”
- We have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to vote.

