

Towards A Systematic Approach - To Filipino Christian Politics

by John Edmiston

Method of Gaining Influence

If we study the lives of successful politicians in Scripture (Joseph, Daniel, David, Nehemiah, Esther, Mordecai, etc.) we find a clear seven step method for gaining and keeping power that was developed by the Israelites in Babylon and has served the Jewish people very well since.

1. **Access** – get access to those in power, get close to “the King” even as a cupbearer, harp player, exiled youth or prisoner.
2. **Solidarity** – form a group or join a group of people you are “one spirit” with- even a small group such as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
3. **Distinctiveness** – of purpose, philosophy and personal standards, do not lose Christian values. Mordecai was distinctive and this initially made enemies but turned out for good.
4. **Contribute Vertically** - Do good for others especially the King, make a contribution, solve difficult problems, build credibility, demonstrate excellent wisdom. Daniel and Joseph read the King’s dreams, Mordecai stopped an assassination, David calmed Saul’s moods with his lyre... Positive networking that benefits people rather than just sales type networking. Focused on serving those above.
5. **Mutual Promotion** – bring your group with you as you are promoted – Daniel and his friends, Joseph and his brothers, David and his mighty men etc.
6. **Strategy** - Aim for key positions and control points even if they do not have much prestige at the time. The Jews took over the trades of goldsmith and silversmith in Europe and used this to control the gold market, and now have considerable influence in the banking industry.
7. **Unity** – resist attacks and threats as a united group. Fiery furnace, Esther etc.

Historically speaking evangelical Christian political parties have generally had limited electoral success. We need to learn from the Jews in exile in Babylon who did not create a Jewish party but rather established a powerful Jewish network in all sections of secular Babylonian society. Keep Bangon Pilipinas also, work both approaches (network & party), not either/or but both/and.

I suggest we form a strong evangelical Christian political network out of the best people who have surfaced during the 2004 election campaign. These would operate as cell groups and bible studies and use the seven-point method above to lift each other up into key positions of influence in Filipino society. Christians would join all major political parties (where conscience allows) write white papers, provide creative solutions and slowly but surely provide God’s wisdom to government and politics.

They would do this without thought of financial gain and would seek to gain ***influence for Christ*** before gaining either position or wealth. A network is cheap to maintain and hard to disrupt and does not have to be elected. When significant numbers of departmental secretaries, directors and the like are bible-believing evangelicals with a deep understanding of political process then it will be possible to steer the nation toward righteousness. Without this underpinning in the bureaucracy a Christian president will be “amongst thorns” and crippled by uncooperative senators and congressmen and corrupt officials.

Power is always given from above. Joseph can be brought out from prison and made Prime Minister, Esther can go from obscurity to being queen, on the other hand very "deserving" people can be passed over. Christians need to realize that power is not a reward for personal virtue or holiness or for being a good Christian.

Authority is a sheer gift hence Jesus' "I give you authority.." or even "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.." If authority was a grace gift to Jesus, how much more to us! God thus can give authority to anyone He wants (Daniel 4:17,25) – even FPJ! God is never *obliged* to promote us simply because we are believers.

Given that authority is always a gift from a superior, then relationships with these superiors i.e. God (the King of Kings) and with "earthly superiors" are critical and the wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) makes much of these relationships. The seven-step method is just a way of optimizing our chances of being given power and authority.

While authority is given as a grace gift it is retained and rewarded on the basis of faithfulness. An unfaithful steward will soon lose office and many of the stories of Jesus indicate dreadful fates for the inept, self-centered, lazy or unbelieving bureaucrat. Jesus may give us authority but we will soon lose it if we do not discharge it according to His will - "let another take his place..".

A Tentative Strategy for 2007 and 2010

1. Educate evangelical Christians in the seven-step method.
2. Get those who "catch-on" to agree to form a low-profile network.
3. Form them into "Friends of Daniel" style bible-study groups across the nation.
4. Circulate position papers across the network to maintain a distinctive focus and set of values.
5. Have roving "apostles" that keep the network inspired and connected.
6. Do not rely on pastors or on ecclesiastical structures. If they cooperate, well and good, if not work around them via a grass-roots network of politically oriented believers.
7. Agree on a common set of purposes and develop long and short-range political objectives.
8. Pray for and identify key government and political positions and aim for them.
9. Get some Christians into key positions in the media.
10. Join in various strategic groups (Rotary, political parties, high status clubs and committees) as active loyal members. Get access to powerful people. Do good for these groups and establish credibility.
11. Develop inside knowledge of the system and circulate this securely and privately through the network.
12. Tackle some of the really tough social problems so there is a sense of action and a sense of reality about the task of government. Also substantially builds credibility.
13. Repeatedly demonstrate strength. Have strong and powerful spokespersons, intellectuals and motivators. Sound strong, look good, have occasional well-organized mass rallies.
14. Never look weak or make public compromises on key values or have failed prophecies.
15. Raise up a parallel intercessors network and keep B. P. as a Christian political party. This gives valuable roles to those who are uncomfortable with a secular approach.
16. Position Christians as candidates in other parties as well.
17. In 2007 field as many evangelical Christian candidates as possible at all levels in all parties. See who the best performers are.
18. Select the best performers for Presidential and Senate candidates in 2010.

19. Get behind these front-runners and make them appear successful and powerful. Develop sophisticated, budgeted, planned political platforms for them.
20. Organize a grass-roots Presidential campaign starting two years in advance.
21. Network the Chinese churches and business community for funding.
22. Win the favor of the diplomatic community.
23. Give an impression of being safe, balanced and wise and economically sound.
24. Run a distinctively Christian campaign using non-offensive secular terminology where possible. Refrain from confusing behavior such as public prophecy.
25. Aim for a major increase in influence rather than the election of a particular person.

Prayer – intercession, revival, prayer meetings, bible studies, prayer networks, prayer shields.

Education – voter education, political education, youth rallies, “bible & politics” seminars.
4Cs (Character, Competence, Connections, Content)

“Prophets”- issue-by-issue politics, confront injustice, develop policies and platforms

“Priests” - to those in power, disciple the leaders, turn them to righteousness.

“Kings” - work in and through the existing political mechanisms, field candidates etc.

Mobilization – worship teams and training groups to help Christians understand how they can be politically effective and the connection between politics and evangelism and revival. (1 Tim 2:1-4)

Logistics & Fundraising – develop the machinery of a major political party.

Orientation – Skillful P.R. to get Filipinos to stop fearing evangelicals and to accept them as a valid part of the political landscape and especially to gain acceptance among Spirit-filled Catholics.

Social Action – do good for the community, win favor, build credibility, holistic ministry knowledge bank / web portal, urban ministry, get to grips with the issues, be transformational.

John Edmiston
johned@aibi.ph