

Foreground and background

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February 6, 2012

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I have found this year's Republican primaries fascinating, particularly the shifting fortunes of the candidates. While Mitt Romney has been more or less the frontrunner of his ambivalent party, the rest of the field has been one crazy jumble of surges and falls from grace. It's political spectacle at its most interesting, if not necessarily its best.

But through all the tumult and rise and fall of candidates, I have no clear idea of what is in the foreground for any of them. What I know is that they all want desperately to be elected, that they definitely don't like President Obama and that they are willing on any given day to slash at each other. What they actually stand for, however, seems vague at best.

We've managed to put the drama of getting elected in the foreground, while the reason candidates want to be elected (and what they'd actually do in office) has fallen into the background. Meanwhile, people of all ranks and standing who are suffering--from powerful people like Naaman to the vulnerable like the leper--seem all but forgotten.

Is it fair to expect candidates to tell us what's in the foreground for them? Would you vote for someone who said, "This is what I'm about," and didn't waiver?

And is it wise to talk politics of any kind in the pulpit? If we can't, or don't, have we given the impression that faith has nothing to say to our political lives? Or are we simply respecting that Christians can approach solving problems from different political points of view?