STUDY GUIDE · 13 MAY 2026

Unshaken: Thinking and Praying About Political Life Under King Jesus

Political headlines can arrive like a storm — protests, crackdowns, shifting powers, the sense that wickedness has the upper hand. It is easy, in that climate, for fear to quietly take the wheel. We scroll, we worry, we argue, and we pray — if we pray at all — in a kind of anxious, grasping way. This study guide is an invitation to step back and ask a more fundamental question: what does it actually mean to *think* and *pray* as a Christian when the news is loud and the stakes feel high? [1]

The psalms and the teachings of Jesus meet us exactly here. Psalm 125 names the feeling directly — the "scepter of the wicked" that looms so large it can pressure even the righteous to bend [2]. And in Luke 12, with a crowd pressing in and religious leaders lying in wait, Jesus turns to his disciples not with political strategy but with a reordering of fear itself [3]. Both texts point in the same direction: the believer's stability in turbulent times is not found in the right outcome at the polls or the right person in power, but in a rightly ordered relationship with the God who rules over all rulers.

Alongside that reordering of fear, Jesus also opens a door into prayer — teaching his disciples that the God of the universe welcomes them as a Father, that they can approach him boldly and confidently, and that who God *is* shapes what we dare to ask [4]. Prayer and politics, it turns out, are not separate compartments. How we pray about public life reveals where we actually believe authority rests — with the powerful of this age, or with the King of kings [5]. In the sections that

follow, we will walk through these themes together, grounding each step in Scripture and in the questions they press upon our lives.

Because God is a welcoming Father with ultimate authority, believers can bring specific, bold prayers about political realities — not grasping anxiously, but trusting confidently.

Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 11 does not confine us to safe, vague petitions. He invites his disciples to approach "the God of the universe as your Father" — a Father who is good, trustworthy, and welcomes bold, direct requests [1]. That confidence changes everything about how we pray when the news is hard. We are not left guessing whether God can be approached about the rise of a hostile leader, an unjust policy, or the suffering of the persecuted. These are precisely the kinds of burdens a child brings to a Father who holds all authority [1]. The posture Scripture calls for is neither the bravado of someone who thinks they can dictate outcomes, nor the paralyzed silence of someone who doubts God is listening — it is humble, direct, faith-filled asking [2].

- What would it look like to bring a specific political concern to God this week, naming it plainly rather than keeping it vague — and what does your hesitation or boldness in doing so reveal about your picture of who God is?
- How does Jesus' insistence that we pray to God as Father rather than as a distant sovereign change the kinds of things you actually dare to ask him about public life?

A rightly ordered fear of God — recognizing his ultimate authority over every earthly power — is what actually frees believers from the anxiety and paralysis that political turbulence can produce.

When political storms gather, the instinctive response is to measure the size of the threat and then scale our fear accordingly. Jesus refuses that calculus. In Luke 12, he names the worst that human

powers can do — kill the body — and then immediately relativizes it: "after that they have nothing more that they can do" [1]. This is not a denial that the danger is real. It is a precise theological claim about the *limits* of earthly authority. Every government, every hostile movement, every oppressive regime operates within a boundary it did not set and cannot cross. Their power is real but it is temporary; it does not have the final word [1].

What replaces that fear is not mere calm or optimism — it is a fear that is *rightly directed*. One reflection on believers living through the outbreak of war in Zaire captures it well: there was no bravado, no panic. They simply waited on the Lord, prayed, and entrusted themselves to God in circumstances entirely outside their control. The observation is striking — this was not the absence of fear, but fear that had been reordered and redirected toward the One who holds ultimate authority and exercises it with perfect care [21]. When God's verdict becomes the weight that matters most, the verdict of the powerful loses its grip.

This is precisely the reordering Psalm 125 points toward. The "scepter of the wicked" can feel pervasive and permanent — its pressure wears people down over time, even tempting the righteous to bend [23]. But the psalm insists: *it shall not rest there*. The same political pressures that provoked the crowd in Luke 12 — religious leaders lying in wait, thousands pressing in — are the backdrop against which Jesus teaches his disciples not a strategy for managing appearances, but a lesson in fearing God rightly [51]. That reordered fear is what makes clear-eyed, unshaken engagement with political reality possible.

- What does Jesus' claim that earthly powers "have nothing more they can do" after death actually change about the specific political fear that weighs most heavily on you right now?
- How does the contrast between "bravado" and "panic" — with a third way of simply waiting on the Lord — challenge the way your community typically responds when a political situation feels out of control?

Conclusion

The scepter of the wicked can feel permanent — but it shall not rest there [1]. The believer who thinks and prays about political life under King Jesus is not someone who has figured out the right strategy or found the right candidate; they are someone who has been reoriented toward a different authority altogether. Because we belong to the one who is unshakable — the cornerstone who cannot be moved — our security does not depend on what the next headline announces [2]. We bring our fears and our hopes before a God we can genuinely know, pouring out the burdens of our hearts to him in relationship, trusting the character he has revealed in his Word [3]. And we rest in the confidence that not even death — let alone an election result or a hostile government — can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord [4]. Jesus is King. He rules with perfect power, perfect care, and he is coming again [5]. That is the anchor. That is the ground on which we think, and pray, and refuse to be shaken.

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