

POLITICS & PURPOSE

A Believer's Guide to Civic Responsibility



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As believers, are we meant to engage in politics? If so, what does that look like given our heavenly calling? The reality is that, as Christians, we hold dual citizenship in both our earthly communities and our eternal home. How we engage in politics matters! Discover the attributes and responsibilities of our role as dual citizens, the nature of the law in government, and the effect of worldview on community engagement. From the way we vote, to the way we serve in our communities—get better equipped to be salt and light as you engage in your civic duties.



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1 | It Starts with Me

It can be overwhelming when we look at the issues around the world today and wonder, “Where do I start?” The reality is that lasting change flows from the inside out and the bottom up. As we are transformed on a personal level, it creates a ripple effect that extends into other areas of society. We must change ourselves first before we can change nations. So, how are we governing ourselves?

Self-government is the foundation of a truly free society. The more internal self-government people exercise, the fewer external laws are required. Choice—the foundation of human freedom—must balance personal liberties with their impact on the community. In this way, my personal behavior before God always considers its effect on my neighbors.

After self-government, the next responsibility is the family. How are we stewarding our families? Healthy families form the basic building blocks of a thriving society.

This also means that the overall health of a nation can be measured by social indicators of family strength (divorce, abortion, out-of-wedlock births, juvenile delinquency, crime rates, reliance on welfare, education levels, etc.). Frederick Douglass once observed, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.” The key to positively impacting communities—and, by extension, the nation—is to nurture healthy families and support those who are struggling.

*The more a
person governs
themselves,
the less they
require governing
by others.*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

—MATTHEW 22:38-39

Like a city whose walls are broken through is a man who lacks self-control.

—PROVERBS 25:28

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

—JEREMIAH 29:7

Beyond self-government and family stewardship, we are called to engage our broader communities. What kind of neighbor are you? Are you contributing positively to those around you? A pivotal role for believers is to be good neighbors, actively caring for and strengthening our local communities.

In every role, whether personal, within our families, or in the wider community, believers can represent Christ and build healthy foundations that strengthen communities and ultimately influence the nation. ^



2 | We Are Dual Citizens

As disciples of Christ, we live as citizens of both the earth and the Kingdom of God. We are part of two kingdoms but have one calling. This critical concept of dual citizenship carries significant implications for the actions of believers on earth. The Apostle Paul provides an excellent example of this by carefully using his Roman citizenship to further the cause of Christ (see Acts 16, 22, and 23). The privileged political and legal status that came with his Roman citizenship shielded him from unfair treatment and gave him access to legal protections—tools that ultimately aided him in spreading the message of Christianity.

It can be tempting to become so focused on our heavenly life that we give little or fragmented attention to our earthly role. This tactic of the enemy is designed to distract us into a “dualist” mentality where our Christianity is contained to Sundays and the everyday matters of life are considered temporal, detached, and corrupt. This thinking can permeate every aspect of our lives. It can, for example, lead us to vote blindly by affiliation to a particular political party rather than by the principles of the Kingdom of God—or simply to not vote at all.

The creation story in Genesis reveals that our spirit comes from God and we were created to commune with our Creator. Each of us is a

*We must recognize
and walk in our
responsibility as
citizens of
both kingdoms.*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

*Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven. —MATTHEW 6:10*

*And has made us to be a kingdom and
priests to serve his God and Father—
to him be glory and power for ever and
ever! Amen. —REVELATION 1:6*

*Once, on being asked by the Pharisees
when the kingdom of God would come,
Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom
of God is not something that can be
observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’
or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of
God is in your midst. —LUKE 17:20-21*

living soul spanning two realms: heaven and earth. The Bible tells us in Revelation 1:6 that we are to serve as both “kings” (earthly citizens) and “priests” (heavenly citizens) (NKJV). This means that we must seek to live out the Greatest Commandment in Matthew 22:36-40 to “love the Lord your God with all your heart” and the second that is like it to “love your neighbor as yourself” (NKJV), which requires both a personal life before God and a social responsibility to those around us.

As citizens first of God’s Kingdom and second of our nations, we play a crucial role in fulfilling the prayer of Matthew 6:10, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (NKJV). Thus, we cannot ignore the realities and responsibilities we have as members of our respective nations.

We must embrace our role as citizens of both kingdoms. Longing for heaven does not release us from our earthly responsibilities; rather, it compels us to continue the work Christ began in bringing God’s Kingdom to earth. Responsible citizenship reflects our role as stewards of creation and representatives of the Lord. ▲

SCRIPTURES CONTINUED

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

—ROMANS 8:19-21

But Paul replied, “They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison, and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves.” The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

—ACTS 16:37-39



3 | Acting as Dual Citizens

What does it mean to act as dual citizens? The Scriptures provide guidance for our responsibilities in both the earthly and heavenly realms. While we belong to two kingdoms, one takes precedence over the other. As believers, our first allegiance is to the Lord—not to a particular government or political party. We must align ourselves with how the Bible calls us to live.

As dual citizens, we are called to:

1. **Stay connected to the world without adopting its values.**

As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. —John 17:18-19 (NRSV)

2. **Act as “salt and light,” reflecting the character and values of Christ personally and corporately.**

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. —Matthew 5:13-16 (NRSV)

As members of the Kingdom of God, our ongoing role as dual citizens should be clearly reflected in our communities in positive ways.

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world, for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God abide forever.

—1 JOHN 2:15-17

Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

—PETER 2:17

3. Respect and honor God’s authority within His establishment of civil government.

For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. —Romans 13:6-7 (NRSV)

4. Obey civil government unless it demands disobedience to Christ.


For the Lord’s sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. —I Peter 2:13-14 (NRSV)

5. Pray for civil government and those in authority.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. —1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NRSV)

6. Engage our civil duties (such as voting) and be ready to serve our communities.

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. —Titus 3:1 (NRSV)

Responsible citizenship is an integral part of our role as representatives of Christ and stewards of creation. As members of the Kingdom of God, our responsibilities as dual citizens are most clearly expressed in our communities. We are ambassadors of Christ with the privilege of bringing God’s Kingdom to earth here and now! 

SCRIPTURES CONTINUED

Then he said to them, “Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.

—MATTHEW 22:21B

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.

—ROMANS 13:1



4 | The Essential Role of Our Worldview

What we perceive as reality — our worldview — determines our perspective and choices. **Ideas have consequences. They form our beliefs, shape our convictions, and solidify into habits and lifestyles.** Our worldview influences how we spend our money, how we interact with family, how we vote, and much more.

Everyone has a worldview, whether they realize it or not! **A worldview can be defined as the set of personal beliefs and assumptions (presuppositions) we hold about society, culture, and the world around us, which determines our view of reality.** Many of these beliefs are held unconsciously, meaning we don't even realize we have them. For Christians, becoming aware of the filters through which we see the world is essential to our spiritual maturity, lifestyle, and influence.

Understanding worldview is not just an added component to our walk with God; it is an essential part of our spiritual formation and maturity; it is central to our relationship with the Lord, as well as our interactions with others and society at large.

The components of our worldview shape our political and economic opinions, voting patterns, and participation in society. A nation's collective worldview determines its social structures. Christ's call to disciple nations requires the intentional infusion of a biblical, Kingdom-centered worldview into the

*We are responsible
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principles of God.*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.

—JOSHUA 1:8

Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect.

—ROMANS 12:2

culture, thereby influencing social systems for the common good.

When we decide to follow Jesus, He begins to transform our hearts and give us discernment. However, our former thinking is not automatically aligned with the Word or character of God. **We are responsible for evaluating our worldview and aligning it with God's principles.** In other words, you

can be saved and yet not have a fully Christian worldview! This concept is evident throughout the New Testament, as Paul repeatedly admonishes the early church to align their thoughts and lifestyles with Christ. We are called to guard our hearts and examine our beliefs to ensure our choices and behavior are led by God, and God alone.

Many Christians today subscribe to a “syncretic worldview” — a blend of doctrines and beliefs from various religions and philosophies. They love Jesus but retain beliefs from other sources. A mixed worldview results in mixed messages and often a lifestyle that does not fully reflect Christ. This explains the vast differences in the political opinions of Christians, based on the degree to which their worldview is biblically grounded. Our aim as believers is to have a fully integrated worldview firmly rooted in the Bible and the principles that guided the life of Christ. ^

SCRIPTURES CONTINUED

Watch out that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

— COLOSSIANS 2:8



5 | All Law is Religious

It is often said that religion and politics don't mix. Secularists argue that religion should remain a private matter of conscience and claim that Scripture has no place in public policy. However, the idea that law can be ultimately neutral is a myth. All societies are inherently "religious"—even those that are anti-God.

Why? Because "religion" is the value system people use to construct the laws that govern their lives. Religion reflects a view of reality by which laws are established that reward some behavior and penalize others. To create laws, a society must define what is right and wrong—these definitions are always grounded in ethical principles, which are inherently religious. Every law communicates what people should or should not do, and these "shoulds" and "should nots" are ethical considerations. Ethical frameworks shape every aspect of life, which is inescapably a religious function. The ethical framework within which one lives is one's religion.

All law is religious because it affirms a moral code for humanity. Full neutrality is impossible, as every worldview and government is rooted in underlying philosophical or faith-based beliefs. In truth, all laws legislate a particular moral or religious perspective. At the core of every government policy are foundational ideologies with traceable religious roots. The crucial question for any government is: By what principles will it be governed?

*All law is
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code for humanity.*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

—MATTHEW 4:4

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

—MATTHEW 5:17

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. —1 JOHN 3:4

Atheists and humanists believe that humanity is the ultimate source for determining right and wrong through reason and philosophy. Christians, however, believe the God of the Bible is the ultimate authority. While there are extreme examples where the state enforces a religious practice, such as Sharia law in some Muslim societies or state-sanctioned churches in medieval England, these are a radical step beyond the reality we are addressing. The laws and principles of Scripture can and should guide government. This does not mean forcing anyone to become a Christian. **Governments function as vehicles of values, reflecting either God's perspectives (see Matthew 4:4) or man's perspectives.**

SCRIPTURES CONTINUED

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. —PSALM 19:7-9

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious...

—1 TIMOTHY 1:8-9A

To separate a person's religious convictions from how they vote on the issues of the culture around them is like trying to separate breathing from being alive—it can't be done. While the institutions of the church and civil government should remain separate, each within its biblically defined sphere, **a citizen's worldview—their view of reality—inevitably shapes how they exercise those views within their civic duties.**

All societies have laws. To obtain peace and prosperity for all, these laws must be based on unchanging truth. For communities to experience their greatest potential for well-being and prosperity, we must advocate for our government's foundational principles to align with godly values and biblical law. ^



6 | Those Who Serve Lead

There are two contrasting approaches to authority and power. The worldly way uses authority to enhance one's own position and advantage over those under it. The godly way uses authority to enhance the value, talents, and opportunities of those under it.

Service-based power leverages authority for the greater good. Christ Himself is the ultimate example of this unique use of power (see Philippians 2:3-11).

A godly servant leader has one primary goal: to draw others into their full potential in God. In contrast, Satan distorts this reality by accusing God of acting in an authority that is self-serving and domineering. In Genesis, he suggests that God is withholding something good, accusing Him of hoarding power:

But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

—Genesis 3:4-5 (NRSV)

Philippians reveals God's true purpose for authority and power and the role of humility:

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

—Philippians 2:7b-8 (NRSV)


The primary goal of a godly servant leader is to draw others into their full potential in God.

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. —PHILIPPIANS 2:3-11

The command to “love thy neighbor”—including those who do not yet believe—acknowledges that God administers justice and righteousness on earth through both saved and unsaved human beings, as seen throughout the Psalms and New Testament. Believers have a biblical mandate to seek righteous justice for the weak and oppressed.

This type of leadership is bold because it seeks the best for people and situations according to God’s truth. At times, this requires actions that are unpopular or contrary to worldly opinion. **True service requires the courage to stand firm in one’s convictions, regardless of others’ approval.**

Believers should lead in service to their communities, helping those in need and addressing injustices with biblical solutions. By practicing this in our communities, we function as salt and light, faithfully fulfilling our role as dual citizens! 

SCRIPTURES CONTINUED

Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

—PSALM 82:3-4

Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers? —Psalm 94:16

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love. —1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. —

EPHESIANS 2:10



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