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TEACHING A THEOLOGY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT  
AT SOUTHERN VIEW CHAPEL IN  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Shaun Daniel Lewis  
May 2019

**APPROVAL SHEET**

TEACHING A THEOLOGY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT  
AT SOUTHERN VIEW CHAPEL IN  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament
<i>EBC</i>	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>MBTJ</i>	<i>Maranatha Baptist Theological Journal</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NTC	New Testament Commentary
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TMSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

## PREFACE

This project would not have been possible without the board members of Civil Servant Ministries: Curt Christensen, Harold Green, and Kim Foster. Your support and understanding throughout this doctoral program never wavered, and it has been a joy to serve Christ alongside each of you.

I want to thank my project advisor, Dr. Michael Wilder, who provided invaluable insight and direction as this project progressed. Dr. Shane Parker served as the project's second reader, and I appreciate the many hours he devoted to improving the quality of my work. Throughout the duration of this project, Betsy Fredrick served as my main editor. Many thanks to her for catching countless errors in my grammar and style. Moreover, I am grateful to the faculty at SBTS. Their labors throughout my doctoral studies have helped me become a better expositor and more loving shepherd.

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Shaun Lewis

Springfield, Illinois

May 2019



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Civil Servant Ministries (CSM) exists to reach the Illinois political arena for Christ. Through weekly office visits, relationships have developed with lawmakers, Supreme Court Justices, and their staff members. I have had the great joy of leading elected officials in prayer, offering counsel, and teaching expositionally in weekly Bible studies since becoming a member of Southern View Chapel (SVC) in 2007.

The elders of SVC have been supportive of the mission of CSM. The congregation understands that civil government is truly a mission field, though many lack a theology of government. Unbiblical attitudes toward political leaders arise at times, though Scripture exhorts believers to pray for their leaders. Thus, the aim of this project is to serve select SVC adult members by teaching an eight-week class to increase theological understanding, change unbiblical attitudes, and increase prayer for political leaders.

#### **Context**

This project was conducted at Southern View Chapel in Springfield, Illinois. SVC is an independent, fundamentalist church formed in 1938, on the southern edges of Springfield. The first pastor served from 1949 to 1980, and the second has remained in the pulpit since. Pastoral longevity has blessed the congregation with great stability and many peaceful years. Little has changed doctrinally, though the church's polity and ministry philosophy began to change with the second pastor.

From a congregationally-led church with topical preaching, the current pastor has moved SVC toward an elder-led model with some expositional preaching. The

church motto, “Learning Truth, Living Truth,” is generally emphasized at SVC. Sunday morning sermons explain the text and offer application. The sermon is followed by a variety of elective classes taught by men in the church. Class sizes range from 20 to 80 adult members. This teaching is coupled with an ongoing doctrinal series each Wednesday night and Bible studies throughout the week. The congregation at SVC has much knowledge of God’s Word.

CSM is an integrated auxiliary of SVC that was formed in 2013. The mission of CSM is to “engage the political arena with the hope of the gospel.” This mission is accomplished by building relationships with political leaders, providing biblical counsel, and leading Bible studies for elected officials to attend. Studies are currently provided for two groups: (1) Illinois Supreme Court Justices and (2) Illinois lawmakers and lobbyists. Some who attend the weekly meetings understand the gospel, though many others seem confused by it.

Establishing this ministry within SVC gave the church a sense of ownership. Volunteer activity and prayer for CSM increased, while financial support from the church steadily rose as well. These positive developments suggest that SVC is interested in engaging the political arena evangelistically. Many believers in the church, however, struggle to honor or to cultivate a submissive attitude toward those in government.<sup>1</sup>

Three factors that hinder biblical responses to government are the church’s proximity to state government, its autonomy, and the lack of familiarity with biblical resources on this subject. SVC is located five miles south of the Illinois statehouse in a capital city of 117,000 residents.<sup>2</sup> Unlike other cities in the state, Illinois government

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<sup>1</sup> Rom 13:1-8, 1 Tim 2:1-4, and 1 Pet 2:13-17 indicate that Christians should pay their taxes, pray for the salvation of their political leaders, honor, and submit to them.

<sup>2</sup> City of Springfield, Illinois, “2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report,” accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.springfield.il.us/Departments/OBM/Documents/CAFR/2015CAFR.pdf>.

employs more than one out of every four Springfield workers.<sup>3</sup> This concentration of state employment naturally increases knowledge of Illinois politics to a degree seen nowhere else in the state. Voters should be knowledgeable, but Illinois politics is saturated with disheartening stories of corruption and dysfunction.

Since 1972, more than 1,000 public officials have been convicted of various crimes in addition to city councilmen, judges, and state lawmakers.<sup>4</sup> Five of the last ten governors in Illinois have been indicted with four of them serving time in prison. Beyond these figures, Illinois has an endless stream of investigations into political corruption.

Stories of government corruption run deep in Illinois, contributing to the state's fiscal disorder. Illinois currently has \$8.3 billion in unpaid bills and has limped without a budget since 2014.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the results of a Gallop Poll conducted from June to December of 2013 come as no surprise. A mere 28 percent of Illinoisans view their government as competent, which is radically lower than the results for any of the other forty-nine states.<sup>6</sup>

The congregation at SVC has no problem viewing state government as a spiritually dark place, a mission field. Proximity to state government, however, increases knowledge of its many problems, which often encourages unbiblical attitudes and actions.

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<sup>3</sup> The state of Illinois employs 26.93 percent of Springfield residents with the second highest employer being the medical community, at 13.22 percent. City of Springfield, Illinois, "2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report," 197.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas J. Gradel, Dick Simpson, and Andris Zimelis, "Curing Corruption in Illinois," Anti-Corruption Report Number 1, University of Illinois at Chicago, accessed September 15, 2016, [https://pols.uic.edu/docs/default-source/chicago\\_politics/anti-corruption\\_reports/anti-corruptionreport.pdf?sfvrsn=2](https://pols.uic.edu/docs/default-source/chicago_politics/anti-corruption_reports/anti-corruptionreport.pdf?sfvrsn=2)

<sup>5</sup> The Ledger, "State of Illinois Comptroller," accessed September 14, 2016, <http://ledger.illinoiscomptroller.gov/>.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "Illinois Residents Least Trusting of Their State Government," Gallup, April 4, 2014, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/168251/illinois-residents-least-trusting-state-government.aspx#1>. At the top of the polling results, 77 percent of residents in North Dakota trusted their state government. Above Illinois were Rhode Island and Maine, each at a dismal 40 percent.

A second factor pertains to church autonomy. SVC elders do not actively cultivate relationships with other churches, nor encourage much involvement with other IFCA International churches.<sup>7</sup> Though church autonomy is a biblically reasonable position, all positions have strengths and weaknesses. An insistence upon local-church autonomy can encourage a negative view toward outside authorities, namely government.

SVC's doctrinal statement explains, "We teach the autonomy of the local church; free from any external authority or control with the right of self-government, and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations."<sup>8</sup> The statement's context is ecclesiastical authority, but churches and religious councils are not the only "hierarchy of individuals" that interfere with the local church. Civil laws and regulations do as well.

The local church has a certain authority, but so does the state, and God's people should submit themselves to both institutions as if submitting to Christ Himself (Rom 13:2). A spirit of freedom and self-governance is characteristic at SVC, and it is not necessarily wrong, but such a spirit lends itself to a suspicion of outside institutions and organizations.

Finally, a lack of familiarity with resources hinders believers from responding biblically to government. Evangelicals have written much about politics, touching upon issues ranging from the sanctity of life to fuel emission standards.<sup>9</sup> Countless sermons

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<sup>7</sup> The Independent Fundamental Churches of America was founded in 1930, after a motion made by J. Oliver Buswell. The organization changed its name to "IFCA International" in 1996. Glen Lehman, "75 Years of IFCA History," IFCA International, December 19, 2014, accessed September 15, 2016, [http://www.ifca.org/site/cpage.asp?cpage\\_id=140043237&sec\\_id=140007594](http://www.ifca.org/site/cpage.asp?cpage_id=140043237&sec_id=140007594).

<sup>8</sup> Southern View Chapel, "The Doctrinal Statement of Southern View Chapel," accessed September 15, 2016, <http://svchapel.org/images/about/doctrinalstatement.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> For further examples of issues, see Wayne Grudem, *Politics according to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); Noah Toly and Daniel Block, eds., *Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010); Erwin Lutzer, *The Truth about Same-Sex Marriage: Six Things You Must Know about What's Really at Stake* (Chicago: Moody, 2004); D. James Kennedy and Jerry

and books have exhorted political activism. Some encourage believers to contact their lawmakers, and others to rally their church into action. Such has forged evangelicalism into a powerful voting bloc.<sup>10</sup> It has not, however, always helped believers understand God's good design for government or encouraged a submissive attitude.

In addition, a cacophony of opinions and commentary fills the political arena. Some SVC members listen to Mark Levin, Rush Limbaugh, or Sean Hannity. A few have absorbed the historical revisionism of David Barton or have been influenced by the pragmatism of evangelical leaders.<sup>11</sup> The congregation is familiar with resources regarding political issues and activism, though it is not quite as familiar with resources that help believers understand God's design for civil government or how to respond.

### **Rationale**

Proximity to state government, church autonomy, and a lack of familiarity with biblical resources were hindering factors at SVC. Certainly, the church's physical location need not change, and autonomy is a biblical position. The lack of familiarity with resources, however, was a factor that could be addressed in the scope of this project. Familiarity requires more than a list of recommended books that few people will order and read. Familiarity can come through teaching. Thus, this project sought to teach a biblical theology of civil government.

Since the congregation at SVC highly esteems God's Word and responds to

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Newcombe, *How Would Jesus Vote? A Christian Perspective on the Issues* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> For an insightful critique, see Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Joe Carter, "Publisher Pulls David Barton's Revisionist History of Thomas Jefferson," The Gospel Coalition, August 10, 2012, accessed September 16, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/publisher-pulls-david-bartons-revisionist-history-of-thomas-jefferson>. For a discussion of evangelical pragmatism in the political arena, see Mark Valeri, "Donald Trump and the Evangelical Political Schism," *Religion and Politics*, August 2, 2016, accessed September 26, 2016, <http://religionandpolitics.org/2016/08/02/donald-trump-and-the-evangelical-political-schism>.

expositional teaching, a series of messages was deemed appropriate. The question, however, was what format would best accomplish the goals of this project? SVC has a unique Sunday school hour in which the congregation chooses between two or three elective classes. Electives have included topics such as “The Book of Romans,” “Apologetics and Evangelism.” or “New Testament History.” The entire congregation does not attend any one elective, but a significant number does attend. This format encourages interaction, and it allows the teacher to better assess the class’s current knowledge. Thus, an eight-week elective pertaining to this project was offered on Sunday mornings.

Teaching a theology of civil government as an elective class increased familiarity with evangelical resources. This format allowed me to better gauge the class’s understanding of the topic, increase their biblical knowledge, challenge sinful attitudes, and encourage attitudes that are God-honoring.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to teach a theology of civil government to select adult members at Southern View Chapel in Springfield, Illinois.

### **Goals**

In light of the aforementioned context, rationale, and purpose, this project had four goals:

1. The first goal was to develop an eight-week curriculum to assist teaching select SVC adult members a theology of civil government.
2. The second goal was to increase knowledge of a theology of civil government among select SVC adult members.
3. The third goal was to change the attitude of select SVC adult members toward their political leaders.
4. The fourth goal was to increase the frequency with which select SVC adult members pray for their political leaders.

## Research Methodology

Four goals determined the effectiveness of this research project. The first goal was to develop an eight-week curriculum to assist teaching select SVC adult members a theology of civil government. Teaching took place during the Sunday school hour as an elective class to an estimated 60 adult members.<sup>12</sup> At the start of the first class, a paper survey was distributed to those present and then collected.<sup>13</sup> Afterwards, the curriculum for week 1 was provided. Subsequent classes began with curriculum distribution followed by teaching and interaction.

Curriculum included topics such as the biblical role of government, biblical attitudes toward political leaders, and praying for political leaders. This goal was measured by an expert panel<sup>14</sup> who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.<sup>15</sup> This goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the minimum requirement was not met, the curriculum was revised to address the weaknesses identified by the evaluation.

The second project goal was to increase knowledge of a theology of civil government among select SVC adult members by teaching the eight-week curriculum. The paper surveys provided on week 1 were anonymous. Participants were asked to provide their birth day, birth month, and the first letter of their middle name as a personal

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<sup>12</sup> An average of 350 people attend the Sunday morning service with 250 staying for Sunday school. SVC offers three main adult Sunday school electives that last eight weeks and are taught by a variety of church leaders. An elective class may range in size from 20 to 80 adults.

<sup>13</sup> See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>14</sup> The expert panel consisted of one lobbyist, one lawmaker, one pastor, one who ministers vocationally to the political arena, one elder or former elder of SVC, and one with expertise in American history.

<sup>15</sup> See appendix 2.

identification number. A minimum of 60 individuals completed the pre-class survey on week 1.

Concluding the eighth class, all adult members received the survey again. Participants were asked if they completed the survey prior to the start of all eight classes and if they attended all eight (an audio recording from class and a PDF of the relevant curriculum was available online for access when a participant was absent). Those who missed the final class received the class survey via email.

Survey questions gauged the participants' theology of civil government and attitudes toward it. The survey also determined how frequently adult members pray for their political leaders. The personal identification number allowed pre and post-class surveys to be paired without compromising anonymity. Changes in biblical knowledge were measured by administering a *t*-test for dependent samples. This second goal was considered successfully met when the analysis demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-class survey scores. A *t*-test for dependent samples "involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores."<sup>16</sup> Since this project focused upon a single group of the same subjects being surveyed under two conditions, a *t*-test of dependent samples was the appropriate test.<sup>17</sup>

The third goal of this project was to change the attitude of select SVC adult members toward their political leaders. Since attitudes can be negative, this goal sought to encourage biblical attitudes such as respect and honor. The pre- and post-class surveys included attitudinal questions pertaining to political leaders. Changes in attitudes were measured by analyzing the responses provided in these questions through a *t*-test for dependent samples. This goal was considered successfully met when the analysis

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<sup>16</sup> Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.



demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to increase the frequency that select SVC adult members prayed for their political leaders. Teaching on the necessity of prayer was a part of the eight-week classes. During one of the weeks, an elected leader who is mature in Christ visited SVC. He could have been anyone who served on the local school board, city council, or county board, but most of these positions are not vocational. A state lawmaker was preferable for this research project. Senator Dale Righter visited SVC to share his personal testimony, to help the class understand the struggles of a Christian in politics, and to stress that the political arena is a mission field. His words encouraged the class to pray for him and for others throughout the political arena.

In the pre-class survey, participants were asked how much time weekly they spend in prayer for political leaders. The analysis of the post-survey results involved a *t*-test for dependent samples from the pre- and post-class surveys. This goal was considered successfully met when a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post survey scores was demonstrated.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

Three terms used throughout this project must be defined for the sake of clarification.

*Civil government.* Civil government or “the state” refers to the institution that holds “sovereign authority over a body of people.”<sup>18</sup> This definition is broad enough to include the simplest as well as the most complex forms of government.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev., updated, and expanded ed. (Nashville: Holman, 1991), s.v., “government.”

<sup>19</sup> For discussion of the difficulty in defining this term, see Robert Duncan Culver, *Towards a Biblical View of Civil Government* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 118-21. Some bodies of people are migratory, while others are defined by geography. For instance, post-Exodus Israel existed without a land though not without a civil

*Politics.* Politics refers to “the science dealing with the form, organization, and administration of a state.”<sup>20</sup>

*Authority.* Authority is the “right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.”<sup>21</sup>

Two delimitations were placed upon this project. First, it was conducted among select SVC adult members who chose to participate in the eight-week class series. Second, the scope of this project was limited to a theology of civil government, a philosophy of engagement, the believer’s attitude toward political leaders, and the necessity of praying for them. The scope of this project did not involve teaching a biblical position on various political issues.<sup>22</sup>

### **Conclusion**

God ordained the institution of civil government. Many members at SVC have graciously supported CSM, though their understanding of government was not necessarily biblical. The next chapter will focus on key passages that construct this theology and show how God’s people should respond to their political leaders. Thereafter, chapter 3 will look at the history of American evangelicals in the political arena to understand how Christians have engaged government. A biblical critique follows in order to propose a more biblical philosophy of engagement.

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government. Furthermore, civil governments have taken countless forms throughout history that bear little resemblance to one another. Modern republics and constitutional monarchies have little in common with theocracies, dictatorships, and tribal chiefdoms.

<sup>20</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v., “politics.”

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v., “authority.”

<sup>22</sup> For instance, this project did not focus on the government’s role in addressing climate change or stem-cell usage.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND A BELIEVER'S RESPONSE

This chapter argues that God ordained civil government, and His people are called to respond by submitting to and praying for their governing authorities. This thesis is rooted in the following five passages: Genesis 1-9, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-17, Acts 5:29, and 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

#### **The Beginning of Civil Government (Gen 1-9)**

Genesis teaches that God established man—His own image—to fill and to rule the land, sea, and animals on His behalf (Gen 1-2). After the fall, however, men began to rule over one another (Gen 4-6). This was the beginning of civil government. After the flood, God reaffirmed man's rule over creation, and He granted man the authority to rule or govern others in order to restrain sin (Gen 9).

#### **Government: From Creation to the Fall (Gen 1-3)**

Genesis introduces God as the sovereign creator of heaven and earth. He separated the day from the night, the land from the seas, and called forth life in a matter of five days. On the sixth day of creation, God created men and women as the “image” (צֶלֶם) and “likeness” (דְּמוּת) of Himself (Gen 1:26).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For exegetical studies on the *imago Dei*, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 184-208; D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53-103; Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

“Image” (צֶלֶם) ordinarily refers to a three-dimensional model such as a statue.<sup>2</sup> This word may also refer to a shadow or a painted image of another.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the animals, God modeled man after Himself.<sup>4</sup> Yet, man is only “like” (דְּמוּת) God and not another god.<sup>5</sup> Men and women are God-like representatives of their creator; they are His physical, royal models.<sup>6</sup> Anthony Hoekema explains that the *imago Dei* means that man is God’s ambassador, a being created to represent God throughout the earth.<sup>7</sup> Claus Westermann adds that man is God’s viceroy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Form, Image,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:645-46.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth M. Gardoski, “Is Culture a Reflection of the Imago Dei?” (paper presented at the Eastern Annual Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, Clarks Summit, PA, March 2004), 6-9.

<sup>4</sup> Van Leeuwen, “Form, Image,” 644.

<sup>5</sup> “Likeness” (דְּמוּת) clarifies “image” (צֶלֶם) by limiting its scope. In other words, man is only “like” God; he is not another god. Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 66. See also Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 56. Steve Lemke lends further support, saying that “likeness” indicates that man is not *homoousia* with God, but *homoiousia*. Man is not of the same substance as God. Steve W. Lemke, “The Intelligent Design of Humans: The Meaning of the *Imago Dei* for Theological Anthropology” (paper presented at the Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Houston, March 2008), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 135; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 65-66. For a helpful summary of views on the *imago Dei*, see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 520. Erickson places views into three major categories: substantive, relational, and functional. Substantive views believe the *imago* is certain parts of man, such as his rationale or spirit. The Patristics and Reformers taught this view. Relational views focus upon man’s relationship with God or others. Dialectic theologians such as Barth and Brunner advocated this view. Functional views maintain that God’s image is an action, such as man ruling or taking dominion. Most Reformed theologians at present hold to this view. For discussion and critique of these views, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 185-86.

<sup>7</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 67-68.

<sup>8</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, trans. John J. Scullion (1984; repr., Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 151.

How does man serve as God’s viceroy or ambassador? According to Genesis 1:26, God created man to “have dominion” over creation. Clines helpfully translates Genesis 1:26 as, “Let us make man in our own image . . . *so that* they may take dominion.”<sup>9</sup> This means that governing or taking dominion is a result of the *imago Dei*.<sup>10</sup> How did God intend for man to take dominion? God intended him to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28). Working in harmony, men and women would govern all of creation in ways pleasing to Him.<sup>11</sup>

Adam started to exercise dominion when God placed him in the garden “to work it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). Gardening was often associated with royalty as an exercise of authority over the land.<sup>12</sup> Adam also exercised his authority when the Lord brought the animals “to the man to see what he would call them” (Gen 2:19). According to Westermann, Adam was beginning to structure the world around him.<sup>13</sup> He was starting to govern, though he did it all alone until God created Eve to work the earth in

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<sup>9</sup> Clines, “The Image of God,” 96. Clines notes that the two volitional verbs in the statements “let us make man” and “let them have dominion” are separated by the *waw*-conjunction. He argues this makes the second verb a consequence of the first. Thus, taking dominion is a consequence or result of being the *imago Dei*. For further support, see von Rad, *Genesis*, 57; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 153; Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1967), 56; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 188.

<sup>10</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 158-60.

<sup>11</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 217, explain that “God made humankind as his image and according to his likeness . . . this speaks of man’s relationship to God as son and his relationship to creation as servant king.”

<sup>12</sup> C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006), 138. Ancient Near-Eastern kingdoms often viewed the king “as gardener *par excellence*.” Catherine Leigh Beckerleg, “‘The Image of God’ in Eden” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2009), 190-92. Apart from extra-biblical texts, Eccl 1:12 refers to the king of Jerusalem as gardening his own vineyards.

<sup>13</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 228-29. See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 68.

harmony with Adam (Gen 2:18-25). As they would eventually multiply, their children would follow in their footsteps to serve as sovereigns under God as well.<sup>14</sup>

God had instituted one law in the Garden of Eden, a prohibition from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). Yet, the first couple disobeyed and ate of the tree. Man's authority over creation remained, but creation would now oppose man. Thus, God cursed the ground that Adam had enjoyed working, and He cursed the animals that man had recently named (Gen 2:14, 17-18; 3:14, 17-19). According to Gordon Wenham, the serpent was not the only animal cursed. God cursed the entire animal kingdom with the serpent cursed "above all" or worse than the rest (Gen 3:14).<sup>15</sup>

The land and the animals changed at the fall, but so did man. Romans 5:12 says that "sin came into the world" through Adam. Rather than submit to God, Adam and his descendants would now rebel. Women would naturally rebel against men, and the animals would naturally rebel against men and women.<sup>16</sup> Rebellion against authority now characterized people and all creation

Adam's disobedience caused two significant shifts that pertain to government. First, man's efforts to govern the land, sea, and animals would fail to reflect God's purity and goodness.<sup>17</sup> Rather than serve as God's viceroy, man would now begin to exploit creation for his own ends. Second, man would now attempt to take dominion over his

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<sup>14</sup> Hamilton, *Genesis*, 139; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 61. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 158.

<sup>15</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 78.

<sup>16</sup> On Gen 3:16, Hamilton, *Genesis*, 202, writes, The desire of the woman for her husband is akin to the desire of sin that lies poised ready to leap at Cain. . . . Far from being a reign of co-equals over the remainder of God's creation, the relationship now becomes a fierce dispute, with each party trying to rule the other. The two who once reigned as one attempt to rule each other.

<sup>17</sup> Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 69. It has been shown that taking dominion is a result of being the *imago Dei*. Ruling creation was not rescinded at the fall. Rather, man became a sinner who would now rule quite poorly. See also *ibid.*, 164-65.

fellow man, an illegitimate exercise of authority. Genesis 4-9 will show both of these shifts and the emergence of the first civil governments.

### **Government: From the Fall to the Flood (Gen 4-9)**

Encouraging advances in husbandry, music, and metallurgy followed man's fall. According to Westermann, the start of "cultural creativity and progress" in Genesis 4 necessitated the existence of political structures to provide some level of order.<sup>18</sup> Sadly, no advance in culture or technology arose to restrain the heart of man. Cain committed the world's first murder and then named the first city after his son (Gen 4:8, 17). Naming implies ownership, which indicates that Cain asserted himself as a ruler over other people.<sup>19</sup>

Genesis 4 also draws attention to Lamech, a man who exults in murder, takes for himself a second wife, and taunts God's vengeance (Gen 4:23-24).<sup>20</sup> According to Derek Kidner, Lamech killed a man who challenged him in some way. Thus, Lamech marks the beginning of brute force as a means of achieving power over others.<sup>21</sup>

The ways of Cain and Lamech became so characteristic that "the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen 6:11).<sup>22</sup> Genesis 6:5 says, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."<sup>23</sup> Man had refused to

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<sup>18</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 329-30.

<sup>19</sup> Frank S. Frick, "The City in Ancient Israel," Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 36 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 41.

<sup>20</sup> Hamilton, *Genesis*, 241.

<sup>21</sup> Kidner, *Genesis*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> "Corrupt" (תָּשׁוּ) indicates that the world God was about to destroy had been destroying itself. *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>23</sup> Theodorus Vriezen says, "A more emphatic statement of the wickedness of the human heart is hardly conceivable." Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament*

rule creation in ways pleasing to God. Worse, man started to rule his fellow man and did so by force.

Genesis 4 provides the first glimpses of man exercising authority over others. Genesis 6 reveals God's immense displeasure and explains His plan "to make an end of all flesh" (Gen 6:13). In response to man's wickedness, God flooded the earth and began again through Noah.

When Noah and his family stepped out of the ark into a new world, Genesis 9 indicates what changed and what remained the same. For instance, Genesis 1:26 and 9:1 similarly say that man is called to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Man also remained as God's image after the flood, and creation remained under man's authority.<sup>24</sup> Man's authority, however, would no longer be a great blessing. Creation would now "fear" and "dread" God's viceroy (Gen 9:2).<sup>25</sup>

Violence had characterized the pre-flood world after the fall, and violence only continued thereafter. As a restraint, God gave two universal restrictions in Genesis 9:4-6.<sup>26</sup> Man was now permitted to eat "every moving thing that lives" (Gen 9:3). God, however, restricted man from consuming the animal "with its life, that is, its blood" (Gen 9:4). Derek Kidner explains that this restriction "at once limited man's rights over God's

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*Theology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 210.

<sup>24</sup> Kidner, *Genesis*, 108. See also Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 462; and von Rad, *Genesis*, 127. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 192, says of Gen 9:2, "'Into your hands they have been given' implies that man has the power of life and death" over the animals. Man's authority over creation remains. Moreover, Gen 9 makes no suggestion that man's dominion had been rescinded.

<sup>25</sup> Hamilton, *Genesis*, 313. See also von Rad, *Genesis*, 127. Fear and dread are negative reactions to authority.

<sup>26</sup> According to Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 464-66, the twice repeated  $\aleph$  at the beginning of Gen 4 and 5 indicates two restrictions. Furthermore, since these restrictions are given to all saved from the flood, the entire human race, they are universally binding.



creatures, since their *life* was his. . . . It also prepared men to appreciate the use of blood in sacrifice.”<sup>27</sup>

The second restriction pertains to homicide: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image” (Gen 9:6). Genesis 9:6 is often understood as the biblical basis for capital punishment.<sup>28</sup> Whereas God had dealt directly with Cain’s murder of Abel, man would now have the authority to deal with murderers such as Cain. Westermann says Genesis 9:6 assumes an authority structure in place to enact this punishment.<sup>29</sup> Thus, God granted man a measure of authority to rule over other men. Abraham Kuyper writes,

It is noteworthy that before the flood as well, an individual despot had assumed some kind of dominion over others . . . although all such functioning of an authoritative person until now lacked ever higher sanction. People cannot create authority. Only God can do that.<sup>30</sup>

Genesis 9:6 provides civil government the authority to restrain sin. Men ruling other men to restrain violence is a far cry from the glory of Genesis 1.

In summary, God created man to govern the land, sea, and animals on His behalf and in ways pleasing to Him. After the fall, however, men began to rule over one another without divine sanction. Due to the wickedness and violence that erupted, God destroyed His creation to begin again through Noah. The Lord then granted man a degree of authority to rule or govern others. Thus, Genesis 1-9 shows the legitimacy of civil

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<sup>27</sup> Kidner, *Genesis*, 108. See also Lev 17:12-14.

<sup>28</sup> Hamilton, *Genesis*, 315. See also Charles C. Ryrie, “The Doctrine of Capital Punishment,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129, no. 515 (July 1972): 213.

<sup>29</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 468. See also C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 286; Ryrie, “The Doctrine of Capital Punishment,” 211.

<sup>30</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace: God’s Gifts for a Fallen World*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman and Ed M. van der Maas, in *Collected Works in Public Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 81-82.

government. People have authority to rule the land, sea, and animals but also to rule over one another in order to restrain sin.

Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 further support Genesis 1-9 by teaching that God is the giver of all authority. These texts also exhort God's people to submit to their governing authorities as unto God.

### **Submission: A Christian Response to Civil Government**

Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 are the two main New Testament passages regarding a believer's response to the governing authorities. Submission to authority is God's will for His people.

#### **Romans 13:1-7**

Paul told the Romans that new life in Christ starts with God's mercy (Rom 12:1-2). According to William Hendriksen, God's mercy should affect a believer's relationship with other believers (Rom 12:3-14), unbelievers (Rom 12:14-21), and even civil authorities (Rom 13:1-7).<sup>31</sup> Peace should characterize each of these relationships.<sup>32</sup> Yet, why did Paul specifically mention the civil authorities here?<sup>33</sup> Douglas Moo says that Romans 13:1-7 stifles a kind of Christian extremism.<sup>34</sup> Moo writes,

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<sup>31</sup> William Hendriksen, *Romans*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 430.

<sup>32</sup> W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 366.

<sup>33</sup> Some have concluded that Rom 13:1-7 is an "alien body" within the epistle. See Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 352. The flow from Rom 12:9-21 to 13:1-7 appears discontinuous, and the lack of syntactical connection between these units is unusual. For further discussion of the discontinuities, see Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 790-91. However, in agreement with Cranfield, Rom 13:1-7 is Pauline, and it would have been odd if the apostle "had nothing to say on a subject which must have been of great importance to Christians in the first century" C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, vol. 2 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 651-53.

<sup>34</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 791.

One can well imagine Christians arguing: “The old age has passed away; we are ‘a new creation in Christ’ and belong to the transcendent, spiritual realm. Surely we, who are even now reigning with Christ in his kingdom, need pay no attention to the secular authorities of this defunct age.” Romans 13:1-7 is directed to just such an attitude.<sup>35</sup>

Paul had told believers not to be conformed to this present world (Rom 12:2), and he emphasized the age to come (Rom 13:11-14). God’s people must not conclude that spiritual realities allow them to forsake earthly realities. Christians must still submit to their secular authorities.

Combatting an unbiblical view of secular authority, Paul exhorted believers in Rome: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities” (Rom 13:1).<sup>36</sup>

According to R. C. H. Lenski, the “governing authorities” are “literally, authorities ‘being over or above.’”<sup>37</sup> The authorities are people, men and women, who exercise power over others in a certain dominion.<sup>38</sup> Submission involves recognizing that those with this power have a claim upon the lives of those under them.<sup>39</sup> Thus, believers should live in a manner that shows they understand the authority of their political leaders.

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<sup>35</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 791.

<sup>36</sup> Dunn and Moo suggest “every person” extends to unbelievers. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC, vol. 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 760; Moo, *Romans*, 794. Certainly, unbelievers would do well to submit to the governing authorities, but as Cranfield reminds, the context for this command is the church in Rome. Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 656. Christians are being exhorted here, not the world at large.

<sup>37</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1945), 785.

<sup>38</sup> Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 760; Moo, *Romans*, 795-96. See also Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 656-60; F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 234-35.

<sup>39</sup> Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 660-62. Cranfield persuasively argues that submission is not a synonym for obedience. He explains that submission is the “conduct that flows naturally from the recognition that the other person as Christ’s representative has an infinitely greater claim on one than one has on oneself.” *Ibid.*, 662. Leon Morris concurs. Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 461.

“Be subject” (Rom 13:1a) is the main command of Romans 13:1-7, and Paul supports this command with two reasons. First, believers must submit to the governing authorities because “there is no authority except from God” (Rom 13:1b).<sup>40</sup> Men may use force or cunning in their quest for power, but all power is granted by God. Lenski explains, “The fact that authorities may act criminally changes nothing as to God’s will regarding their establishment among men.”<sup>41</sup> Paul reiterates, saying, “Those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom 13:1c).<sup>42</sup> Stein explains, “Those that exist” (οἱ οὐῶσαι) or more literally, “the ones being” refers to all who currently hold authority.<sup>43</sup> Since the present authorities “have been instituted” or “ordained” by God, God’s people dare not rebel.<sup>44</sup>

Should believers rebel, Romans 13:2 states a consequence: “Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.” According to Leon Morris, “what God has appointed” (τῆ τοῦ θεοῦ διαταγῆ) should be translated as “a divine institution.”<sup>45</sup> Paul wanted his readers to grasp

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<sup>40</sup> Robert H. Stein, “The Argument of Romans 13:1-7,” *Novum Testamentum* 31, no. 4 (1989): 329-36, 343; Moo, *Romans*, 794. Both reasons begin with “for” (γὰρ) and modify “be subject” (ὑποτασσέσθω) in Rom 13:1. God’s sovereignty over governments is thoroughly established in Jewish history. See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 761; Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 663. For biblical examples, see 2 Sam 12:8, Prov 8:15-16, Isa 45:1-7, Dan 2:21, 4:17.

<sup>41</sup> Lenski, *Epistle to the Romans*, 786. Lenski also says that Pharaoh is a “striking case” of an evil ruler whom God elevated to power. *Ibid.*, 787.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 682. See also Stein, “Argument of Romans,” 330.

<sup>43</sup> Stein, “Argument of Romans,” 330.

<sup>44</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 798. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 762, cautions, “Those who abuse their God-given authority or call for greater submission than God has ordered will come under the judgment of God.” The limits of civil authority is discussed with civil disobedience in the section on Acts 5:29.

<sup>45</sup> Morris, *Romans*, 462. “What God has appointed” implies a verb in the Greek text. “A divine institution” translates the Greek nouns appropriately. “The ordinance of God” is also acceptable. Schreiner, *Romans*, 683.

the seriousness of opposing civil authority. To resist is to contend with God, and those who normally act in this manner “will incur judgment” (Rom 13:2).<sup>46</sup> Paul warns of eternal condemnation.<sup>47</sup>

Paul’s second reason for submission is practical: “For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad” (Rom 13:3a). Leon Morris says, “No ruler ever favors what he sees as wrong and punishes what he regards as right.”<sup>48</sup> Outrageous circumstances may arise, and mistakes may occur, but, generally speaking, submission is nothing to fear.<sup>49</sup> Rather than being punished for bad conduct, Paul exhorts Christians to “do what is good, and you will receive [the ruler’s] approval” (Rom 13:3b).<sup>50</sup> Good, law-abiding citizens need not fear the authorities. Paul explains that the ruler is “God’s servant for your good” (Rom 13:4).<sup>51</sup> William Hendriksen states that the “basic aim of the one in authority is not

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<sup>46</sup> “Resistance” (ἀνθεστηκότεες) refers to a negative reaction to an established policy or “a state of rebellion.” Robert Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 243; Moo, *Romans*, 799.

<sup>47</sup> Many understand “judgment” (κρίμα) primarily as eschatological due to the immediate context—a future judgment, though they say it is not eternal condemnation. They also say the punishment inflicted by the authorities may be implied here as well. See Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 664; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 762; Hendriksen, *Romans*, 434; Morris, *Romans*, 462; Schreiner, *Romans*, 683-84. Moo and Stein agree that κρίμα is eschatological in Rom 13:2. The state, however, is not implied here since Paul’s argument has not advanced enough by the second verse (the state as part of divine judgment is taught in Rom 13:4b). In addition, Paul’s normal use of κρίμα is eschatological, referring to eternal condemnation. These reasons are compelling to conclude that Rom 13:2 should be understood as a warning of divine judgment, namely eternal condemnation. See Moo, *Romans*, 799; Stein, “Argument of Romans,” 332. Moo, *Romans*, 799, captures the idea of Rom 13:2, saying that “those who perpetually oppose secular rulers, and hence the will of God, will suffer condemnation for that opposition.”

<sup>48</sup> Morris, *Romans*, 463.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. See also Hendriksen, *Romans*, 434.

<sup>50</sup> Some identify “what is good” (τὸ ἀγαθὸν) in Rom 13:3b with the good that God promises believers in Rom 8:28. See Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 666. Due to the immediate context, τὸ ἀγαθὸν refers to what society views as good—a good, law-abiding citizen. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 683; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 764; Morris, *Romans*, 463.

<sup>51</sup> Paul received mistreatment from the authorities, but also protection at times. For examples of mistreatment, see Acts 16:22-24 and 2 Cor 11:32-33. For examples of

to hurt but to help . . . [so that] the believer is able to lead ‘a tranquil and quiet life’” (1 Tim 2:2).<sup>52</sup> Thus, a negative view of the authorities is not justified.

Should believers ever fear the authorities? Yes. Paul writes, “If you do wrong, be afraid, for [the ruler] does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer” (Rom 13:4b). God’s servant to do good is also God’s avenger to punish evil.<sup>53</sup> God may use the state’s “sword” against His own people should they rebel against those He has established.<sup>54</sup>

Romans 13:5 summarizes verses 1-4: “Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience.”<sup>55</sup> The practical reason

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protection, see Acts 19:35-41, 21:30-40, 22:24-29. Stein, “Argument from Romans,” 334, writes, “Governments, even oppressive governments, by their very nature seek to prevent the evils of indiscriminate murder, riot, thievery, as well as general instability and chaos, and good acts do at times meet with its approval and praise.” Furthermore, the phrase “for he is God’s servant” (θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν σοὶ) in Rom 13:4 emphasizes God as the source of a ruler’s authority. According to Lenski, *Epistle to the Romans*, 791, “the genitive indicates origin or possession: God’s own tool.” Morris, *Romans*, 463, adds that “servant” (διάκονός) originally referred to the lowly service of table waiters, and the pronoun, σοὶ, is a dative of advantage, “an expression that adds a personal touch.” In other words, the presence of governing authorities is advantageous.

<sup>52</sup> Hendriksen, *Romans*, 435.

<sup>53</sup> The governing authorities serve God in an affirming and punitive sense. They should praise law-abiding citizens and punish law-breakers. Moo, *Romans*, 801. Bruce, *Romans*, 237, explains, “It is plain that two distinct spheres of ‘service’ to God are envisaged.” For examples of God executing His wrath through civil government, see Isa 10:5, 13:5; Jer 50:25.

<sup>54</sup> Rom 13:4 is often cited alongside Gen 9:4-6 as biblical support for capital punishment. The “sword” (μάχαιραν) has been interpreted metaphorically for military force. See Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 664. Most reject an older view that the “sword” refers to the *ius gladii*, the authority of higher officials to take the life of soldiers under them. See Morris, *Romans*, 464; Moo, *Romans*, 801-2; Dunn, *Romans*, 764. Schreiner, *Romans*, 684, explains that the “sword” (μάχαιραν) is not a technical term limited to the *ius gladii*, and there is no evidence that Rom 13:4 concerns a Jewish rebellion. According to Stein, “Argument of Romans,” 335, μάχαιραν is a generic term, much broader than capital punishment. Yet, Stein says that in the context of Rom 13, “few of Paul’s readers would have thought that capital punishment was not included in the meaning of this metaphor.” See also Moo, *Romans*, 802; Hendriksen, *Romans*, 435.

<sup>55</sup> Paul introduces his summary of both reasons for submission with “because of” (διὰ) in Rom 13:5. See Moo, *Romans*, 803.

to submit to the authorities is to avoid punishment (Rom 13:3-4) or, as Romans 13:5 says, “to avoid wrath.” Morris identifies this wrath as God’s wrath manifest through the authorities.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the theological reason to submit is the knowledge that God is sovereign (Rom 13:1b-2). Knowing that rebellion against the ruler is a sin against God, “the accusing voice of conscience” will arise when a believer refuses to submit.<sup>57</sup>

“For the sake of conscience,” Paul explained, “you also pay taxes” (Rom 13:5, 6).<sup>58</sup> Paying taxes avoids punishment, but Christians should pay their taxes because they recognize God has established their governing authorities. To emphasize the point, Paul says, “The authorities are ministers (λειτουργοὶ) of God, attending to this very thing” (Rom 13:6). God’s servant (διάκονός) who collects taxes is called God’s minister (λειτουργός).<sup>59</sup> Thomas Schreiner writes, “The astonishing element here is that Paul ascribes to civil officials a divine service (not in a cultic sense) in collecting taxes!”<sup>60</sup> The people who serve in government may reject the Living God, but nonetheless, they perform a sacred duty. Thus, they owe their positions not to the will of the people but to the will of God.

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<sup>56</sup> Morris, *Romans*, 2:465. For further support, see Stein, “Argument of Romans,” 336.

<sup>57</sup> Hendriksen, *Romans*, 436; Bruce, *Romans*, 237. See also 1 Pet 2:13, which encourages believers to submit to the authorities “for the Lord’s sake.” Moo, *Romans*, 436, says the conscience is implied in 1 Pet 2:13. J. B. Phillips paraphrases Rom 13:5 saying that a believer must obey the authorities “not simply because it is the safest, but because it is the right thing to do” J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 334.

<sup>58</sup> According to Moo, *Romans*, 436, Rom 13:6 begins, “For because of this . . .” The nearest antecedent to “this” is in the previous verse, “for the sake of conscience.” For additional support, see Cranfield, *Epistle to the Romans*, 668. On the importance of a clear conscience, see Acts 24:16.

<sup>59</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 804, says “minister” (λειτουργός) is regularly used in the Septuagint and New Testament of a person performing a religious service.

<sup>60</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 686. Some see taxation as the climax of Rom 13:1-7 for two reasons. First, these instructions are unique among all of Paul’s letters. Second, Rome’s indirect taxation, similar to a sales tax or toll, was highly unpopular in Rome. To make matters worse, Nero sought to abolish these taxes and then declined. See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 772-73; Schreiner, *Romans*, 686-87.

Paul concludes with Romans 13:7: “Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” Paul’s mention of “taxes” and “revenue” refer to two types of Roman taxes.<sup>61</sup> “Respect” and “honor” take the discussion beyond duty to a matter of the heart. William Hendriksen paraphrases Romans 13:7: “Telling the officials, ‘Here’s the money, and now get out,’ will never do. You should respect these men for the sake of their office, and honor them in view of their faithful devotion to their task. Remember: they are God’s ministers!”<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, Romans 13:1-7 calls believers to submit to the authorities since it is God who sanctions or legitimizes all authority. Civil governments may abuse this gift and commit egregious evils, but in general, believers need not fear. Government is a tool that God uses to bless the upright and to punish the evil. Whereas Paul’s argument led to the application of paying taxes, Peter will exhort submission as the means to silencing false witnesses.

### **First Peter 2:13-17**

Roman culture grew to despise Christians.<sup>63</sup> Within three decades of the Resurrection, Nero unleashed the first great wave of persecution against the church. Peter and Paul lost their lives, while Christians throughout the empire experienced persecution

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<sup>61</sup> According to Morris, *Romans*, 466, Origen interpreted “taxes” (φόρος) and “revenue” (τέλος) as a tax on land versus a tax on trade. Most view the difference as direct versus indirect taxation. See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 772-73; Schreiner, *Romans*, 686-87; Moo, *Romans*, 805.

<sup>62</sup> Hendriksen, *Romans*, 437-38.

<sup>63</sup> During the time Peter wrote, the authorities negatively profiled, mistreated, and indicted Christians. See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1945), 109. According to Paul Achtemeier, “The situation was one of sporadic hostility to Christians, exhibited more by social pressure than by official policy, and these verses are a response to that situation.” Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 179.



and slander from unbelievers.<sup>64</sup> How should God’s people have responded? Peter urged believers not to rebel but to submit to their governing authorities (1 Pet 2:13).<sup>65</sup>

First Peter 2:13-14 says, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.” Self-preservation is not the motivation for submitting to authority, but a desire to please the Lord.<sup>66</sup> Peter Davids explains, “It is because Christ, not Caesar, is Lord that one submits.”<sup>67</sup>

To whom do believers submit? First Peter 2:13 answers with the phrase “every human institution” (πάση ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει). Yet, Peter’s exhortation is more personal than it may seem. Paul Achtemeier says the phrase “every human institution” (πάση ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει) should be translated as “every human being.”<sup>68</sup> The phrase is qualified

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<sup>64</sup> For an overview of Paul’s ministry and martyrdom, see John W. Drane, “Paul,” in *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible*, ed. Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For Peter, see Richard J. Bauckham and Ernest Best, “Simon Peter,” in Metzger and Coogan, *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible*.

<sup>65</sup> Rom 13:1 uses the present tense of the verb, while 1 Pet 2:13 uses the aorist tense. On the meaning of “be subject,” see n39 in this chap. Thomas Schreiner writes, “Peter gave a command that represents a general truth, that is, he specified what Christians should do in most situations when confronting governing authorities. Believers should be inclined to obey and submit to rulers.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 127.

<sup>66</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 83. See also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 182.

<sup>67</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 99. The limits of civil authority will be discussed with civil disobedience in the section on Acts 5:29.

<sup>68</sup> Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 182, explains that κτίσει is never translated as “human order” or “human institution” in Greek literature. Furthermore, πάση ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει is modified by “emperor” and “governors.” Both modifiers are human beings, not institutions. For further support, see Schreiner, *Peter*, 128; Davids, *Epistle of Peter*, 98; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC, vol. 49 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 124. Schreiner, *Peter*, 128, explains Peter’s selection of the phrase, πάση ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει: “The emperor cult was popular in Asia Minor, and Christians doubtless felt social pressure to participate. Peter reminded his readers at the outset that rulers are merely creatures, created by God and existing under his lordship.”

as human authorities, namely “the emperor as supreme” and “governors as sent by him” (1 Pet 2:13-14).<sup>69</sup> Thus, Peter calls God’s people to yield themselves to other people—every human authority in government, from top to bottom.<sup>70</sup>

Few Christians dealt directly with the emperor, though it was common to speak with lower government officials.<sup>71</sup> Some of these officials could harm the church, and others paraded their immorality.<sup>72</sup> Submitting to authorities such as these was difficult, and Peter understood the struggle. The apostle reminded his audience that every Roman official was sent by Caesar “to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good” (1 Pet 2:14). Normally speaking, the authorities (1) punish those who break their laws and (2) praise those who keep them.<sup>73</sup> Christians should have a more optimistic view of government because the authorities do not exist to punish Christians simply for being Christians.<sup>74</sup>

Regardless of ease or difficulty, submission is rendered “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Pet 2:13). First Peter 2:15 says, “This is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.”<sup>75</sup> “Doing good” (ἀγαθοποιῶντας)

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<sup>69</sup> Schreiner, *Peter*, 129, says that “governors” (ἡγεμόσιν) is a generic term for leaders throughout government. Examples include procurators, proconsuls, and tax collectors. See also Michaels, *1 Peter*, 125.

<sup>70</sup> Schreiner, *Peter*, 129.

<sup>71</sup> Davids, *Epistle of Peter*, 100.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Lenski, *Epistle of St. Peter*, 111. Rom 13:3-4 has the same twofold purpose of government. According to Schreiner, *Peter*, 129, the Romans would “erect statues, grant privileges, or commend in other ways those who helped the community.” For a detailed study of the ways Roman government praised its citizens, see Bruce W. Winter, “The Public Honouring of Christian Benefactors: Romans 13:3-4 and 1 Peter 2:14-15,” *JSNT* 34 (1988): 87-103.

<sup>74</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, 126-27.

<sup>75</sup> Schreiner, *Peter*, 130.

is more than keeping the laws of the land.<sup>76</sup> God's people should make themselves useful to their neighbors, looking for opportunities to serve where needs arise.<sup>77</sup> Such service is "God's will" and should help "put to silence the ignorance of foolish people" (1 Pet 2:15).<sup>78</sup> Who are the foolish? They are all who do not fear the Lord (Prov 1:7).<sup>79</sup> Their problem is not a lack knowledge but an outright refusal to know the Lord. Thus, the foolish fabricate charges against those who know Him.<sup>80</sup>

Peter wanted believers to submit to their authorities, in part, because the authorities often help "put to silence" slanderous accusations (1 Pet 2:15). Regardless, whether God's people receive civil help or not, God's will is the same: do good with the hope that the accuser's words may turn from slander to praise.<sup>81</sup> I. Howard Marshall explains,

What starts off, then as apparently a lesson in political passivity culminates in an injunction to take an active role in society. Christians are to be strangers and pilgrims so far as the sinful way of life of the world is concerned; but where it is a case of doing good, they are to take an active part.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Davids, *Epistle of Peter*, 100. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 185 says that the stem, ἀγαθοποι-, is used six times in 1 Peter to describe Christian behavior. See 1 Pet 2:14-15, 2:20, 3:6, 3:17, 4:19.

<sup>77</sup> Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 185.

<sup>78</sup> Schreiner, *Peter*, 130, explains that Peter's goal "was that the good behavior of Christians will minimize slanderous attacks. . . . Opponents will be discovered to be animated by hatred, lacking any objective ground for their criticism of believers."

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 185, writes, "The word used here for 'ignorance,' ἀγνοσία, implies not so much a lack of information . . . as culpable ignorance." See also D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1992), 168.

<sup>81</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, 127. Michaels says that 1 Pet 2:15 looks back to v. 12 for context. First Pet 2:12 says, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

<sup>82</sup> Marshall, *1 Peter*, 84-85.

God's people are not called to a life of passivity. Peter exhorted believers to be proactive about doing good in this world.

What kind of Christian will be able to silence the critic? Verse 16 answers with three characteristics, each introduced with the adverb “as” (ὡς).<sup>83</sup> Peter writes, “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God” (1 Pet 2:16). Christians must live (1) as a people who rightly understand their spiritual freedom in Christ; (2) not as those who abuse their spiritual freedom; and (3) as slaves to God.<sup>84</sup> Believers are free from the “ignorance” of the world (1 Pet 1:14) and its “darkness” (1 Pet 2:9). They are also free from “sin” (Rom 6:22) and the “law” (Rom 8:2). Some first-century believers said their spiritual freedom meant they were also free from civil authority (1 Pet 2:16). Peter said otherwise. True spiritual freedom is no excuse for licentious living or civil rebellion.<sup>85</sup> Thomas Schreiner explains, “True liberty, according to the New Testament, means that there is freedom to do what is right. Hence, only those who are slaves of God are genuinely free. Believers are called upon to live under God's lordship, obeying the government as God's servants.”<sup>86</sup>

The apostle concludes by exhorting Christians to “honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Pet 2:17). These four commands further define the meaning of “doing good” (1 Pet 2:15).<sup>87</sup> Believers are to honor all people, not

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<sup>83</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 168-69. Verse 16 begins with the adverb, ὡς, and no verb or connecting particle. In agreement with Hiebert, Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 186, says each of the three uses of ὡς modifies the implied subject v. 13, “you.” Thus, the correct verb to supply is not “live” but “submit.” See Schreiner, *Peter*, 131.

<sup>84</sup> Schreiner, *Peter*, 131.

<sup>85</sup> Davids, *Epistle of Peter*, 102. See also Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 169; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 128.

<sup>86</sup> Schreiner, *Peter*, 131. Lenski, *Epistle of St. Peter*, 113, explains that, paradoxically, “slavery to God is the truest and most complete human freedom; all other so-called freedom is fiction.”

<sup>87</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 170. Some see a chiasmic structure in these commands. “Honor everyone” and “honor the emperor” bracket the commands to “love the

only those in positions of power.<sup>88</sup> The emperor, however, is specifically mentioned. Mentioning him reinforces that God’s people must honor Caesar.<sup>89</sup> Believers should continue to love one another, and rather than fear the emperor, they must fear God alone.<sup>90</sup> Lenski asks, “What can even ignorant men say against us if we follow these injunctions?”<sup>91</sup>

The thrust of 1 Peter 2:13-17 is similar to Romans 13:1-7. Both passages exhort believers to be subject to their governing authorities. Peter teaches that submission is not passively keeping the law but also involves good works. The motivation for being subject is to please God with the hope of silencing false accusations from unbelievers. Submission to authority is part of the normal Christian life. Acts 5, however, illustrates an important exception.

### **The Limits of Submission: A Case Study (Acts 5:29)**

Scripture records several instances when God’s people are commended for disobeying civil authorities. The Hebrew midwives, for example, refused to murder newborns (Exod 1:15-21), Daniel refused to pray to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 6), and Obadiah refused the slaughter of God’s prophets (1 Kgs 18:1-4).<sup>92</sup> Acts 5:17-42 has been selected

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brotherhood” and “fear God.” See Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 187; Davids, *1 Peter*, 103.

<sup>88</sup> Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 188.

<sup>89</sup> Lenski, *Epistle of St. Peter*, 114.

<sup>90</sup> Davids, *Epistle of Peter*, 104, says the command to honor the emperor contrasts with the previous command to fear God.

<sup>91</sup> Lenski, *Epistle of Peter*, 114.

<sup>92</sup> Norman Geisler has grouped biblical examples of divinely approved civil disobedience into seven categories. Believers should disobey when the authorities (1) forbid the worship of God; (2) command the murder of innocents; (3) command the murder of other believers; (4) order the worship of idols; (5) command prayers unto a man; (6) forbid evangelism; and (7) order the worship of men. Norman L. Geisler, “A Premillennial View of Law and Government,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142, no. 567 (July 1985): 262. Acts 5:17-42 is an example of category 6.

for a case study because this text (1) clearly states the biblical principle for civil disobedience; (2) involves believers in the church; and (3) is frequently cited as support for civil disobedience.<sup>93</sup>

According to Acts 4:2, leaders of the Sanhedrin had become “greatly annoyed because the apostles were teaching” about the Resurrection. As the church swelled from hundreds to thousands, the Sanhedrin’s annoyance turned to “jealousy” and resulted in greater persecution (Acts 5:17).<sup>94</sup> Jewish leaders arrested the apostles only to find these men outside their cells the next morning preaching (Acts 5:19-20). Luke records the Sanhedrin’s exchange with the apostles:

And the high priest questioned them, saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:27b-29)

The apostles had been called by Christ to speak as His “witnesses” (Acts 1:8). Thus, as Craig Keener states, “They could not obey the leaders’ command to silence and still obey Christ’s command to speak.”<sup>95</sup>

The apostles chose to disobey the Sanhedrin and to keep teaching. Peter defends his choice on the principle that “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). C. K.

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<sup>93</sup> The clear principle for civil disobedience is provided in Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.” According to Jaroslav Pelikan, this principle has been cited throughout church history. Examples include the Heidelberg Catechism, the Augsburg Confession, the Barmen Declaration of the German Evangelical Church of 1934, and the Batak Confession of 1951. Each state that God must be obeyed rather than men regardless of whether man is in a position of civil or ecclesiastical authority. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 89.

<sup>94</sup> Throughout Acts 1-12, the Jewish authorities intensify their persecution of the church. See John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 164. According to Acts 1:15, 2:41, and 5:14, the church had rapidly grown from barely a hundred believers to many thousand by the time the apostles began to experience the persecution in Acts 5.

<sup>95</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 2:1218.

Barrett writes, “If a choice has to be made God must have the preference rather than men.”<sup>96</sup> Disobedience was the *only* God-honoring choice.

Regarding civil disobedience, Acts 5 provides at least three insights. First, disobedience is justified only when a believer cannot obey God and the civil authorities.<sup>97</sup> Charles Ryrie explains, “Whenever a believer feels obliged to disobey his government, he must be sure it is not because the government has denied him his rights but because it has denied him God’s rights.”<sup>98</sup> Prison, for instance, restricted the apostles’ freedom, but none of these men refused arrest. They did not flee the region as fugitives, fight back, or even malign the Jewish authorities. Rather, the apostles lived in submission to the furthest extent possible without sinning. Thus, Peter’s actions in Acts 5 align with his exhortation to “be subject” (1 Pet 2:13).

Second, civil disobedience is a means for the believer to identify with Christ. The apostles had been arrested for proclaiming the Resurrection, warned, charged not to teach, and threatened (Acts 4:1-21a). When the Sanhedrin arrested them a second time, the apostles received a severe beating (Acts 5:40).<sup>99</sup> According to Brian Tabb, Luke uses these accounts of suffering to connect the apostles to Jesus.<sup>100</sup> In fact, as the apostles

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<sup>96</sup> Peter’s defense in Acts 5:29 involves a comparison, μᾶλλον ἢ “rather than.” Obedience to man is assumed until it conflicts with obedience to God and forces a choice. See C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ICC, vol. 1 (London: T & T Clark, 1994), 288-89.

<sup>97</sup> The Sanhedrin was the civil authority in Judea at the time, because Rome allowed the Sanhedrin to make, execute, and interpret its own civil laws. Rome intervened in cases that challenged Roman sovereignty over the region or when the Jews sought the death penalty. See Walter M. Chandler, *The Trial of Jesus: From a Lawyer’s Perspective* (Norcross, GA: The Harrison Company, 1976), 90.

<sup>98</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, “The Christian and Civil Disobedience,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127, no. 506 (April 1970): 160.

<sup>99</sup> According to Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 252, the apostles received 39 lashes with a leather whip across the chest and back. Many men died as a result.

<sup>100</sup> Brian J. Tabb, “Salvation, Spreading, and Suffering: God’s Unfolding Plan

suffered for disobeying man, they responded by “rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:41). Civil disobedience, like civil submission, should be “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Pet 2:13).

Finally, civil disobedience is no excuse for civil rebellion. Though the former may be God’s will for His people at times, the latter is not. The apostles disobeyed the authorities when no other choice was possible. Though they were punished, these men did not retaliate. Instead, they rejoiced and “did not cease teaching and preaching” (Acts 5:41-42). The apostles did not fan any flames of anger, riot against the Sanhedrin, or stage a revolt.<sup>101</sup> Norm Geisler says the apostles were “insubmissive” though not “insubordinate.”<sup>102</sup> Their disobedience went no further than it absolutely must.

Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 have shown that submission is God’s will for His people. Acts 5:29 indicates an important exception: When obedience to God and man are mutually exclusive, disobedience to man becomes God’s will. First Timothy 2:1-4 will show that in addition to being subject, God’s people are called to pray for those in authority.

### **Prayer: A Christian Response (1 Tim 2:1-4)**

Paul’s first letter to Timothy yields much instruction for organizing the local church.<sup>103</sup> The second chapter of this letter focuses on the subject of public worship. How should God’s people conduct themselves when they gather as a church?<sup>104</sup> Paul writes,

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in Luke-Acts,” *JETS* 58, no. 1 (March 2015): 55.

<sup>101</sup> W. Robert Cook, “Biblical Light on the Christian’s Civil Responsibility,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127, no. 505 (January 1970): 56.

<sup>102</sup> Geisler, “A Premillennial View,” 262-63.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 42.

<sup>104</sup> Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2001), 94-95.



“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Tim 2:1-2).

“First of all” conveys more than the first of many items (1 Tim 2:1). These words introduce the immense importance of prayer in corporate worship.<sup>105</sup> Paul urges four kinds of prayers: “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings” (1 Tim 2:1). Since these terms have some overlap in meaning, Paul uses them to emphasize the importance of every aspect of prayer.<sup>106</sup> However, they are not complete synonyms.<sup>107</sup> “Supplications,” (δεήσεις) or entreaties, are requests made to God for a specific need.<sup>108</sup> The term for “prayers” (προσευχάς) is general, encompassing all kinds of prayers.<sup>109</sup> “Intercessions” (ἐντεύξεις) refers to pleading on behalf of another,<sup>110</sup> and “thanksgivings” (εὐχαριστίας) are words of appreciation or gratitude to God.<sup>111</sup>

Paul commanded that corporate prayers “be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions” (1 Tim 2:1-2). Thus, God’s people should pray for all kinds

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<sup>105</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 87.

<sup>106</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 166. See also William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 79.

<sup>107</sup> According to George Knight, “The four words . . . represent distinguishable nuances that Paul wanted to specify.” George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 114. See also D. Edmond Hiebert, “The Significance of Christian Intercession,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149, no. 593 (January 1992): 16-17.

<sup>108</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 114.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 92.

<sup>111</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 115. See also Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 166-67. Knight summarizes, “These four terms delineate aspects of what should mark prayers δεήσεις, making requests for specific needs; προσευχάς, bringing those in view before God; ἐντεύξεις, appealing boldly on their behalf; and εὐχαριστίας, thankfulness for them” (Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 115).

of people outside the church, one particular group being the governing authorities.<sup>112</sup> “Kings” in 1 Timothy 2:1 refers to the emperor, but since the word is plural, it also refers to the present and successive emperors.<sup>113</sup> The phrase “all who are in high positions” broadens the focus of prayer to every authority in government (1 Tim 2:2).<sup>114</sup> Ralph Earle writes,

When it is remembered that the Roman emperor when Paul wrote this Epistle was the cruel monster Nero—who later put Paul and Peter to death—it will be realized that we should pray for our present rulers, no matter how unreasonable they may seem to be.<sup>115</sup>

Prayer for political leaders is unconditional.

Why should God’s people pray for unbelievers, even the secular rulers?

According to 1 Timothy 2:2, the purpose is “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” Believers should pray for outsiders that the church might enjoy more favorable conditions and that God’s people might publicly live out their faith.<sup>116</sup> The hope is that prayer may result in a “peaceful and quiet” way of life, an existence free from persecution and harassment.<sup>117</sup> Donald Guthrie writes, “Whether the civil authorities are perverted or not they must be made the subjects of prayer, for Christian citizens may in this way influence the course of national affairs.”<sup>118</sup> The phrase

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<sup>112</sup> According to Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 115, “all people” refers to “all kinds of people” or groups of people, not every person on the planet. “Kings” is a subgroup of “all people,” which indicates that “all people” refers to groups. For further explanation, see Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, 93-94.

<sup>113</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 167.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>115</sup> Ralph Earle, *1 & 2 Timothy*, in. vol. 11 of *EBC*, ed. Frank Gaebelien (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 357.

<sup>116</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 169-70. For further support, see Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 116-17.

<sup>117</sup> Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, 95.

<sup>118</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL:

“godly and dignified” (1 Tim 2:2) explains the believers’ way of life as being distinctly Christian in the eyes of the world.<sup>119</sup>

Paul says that praying for unbelievers throughout society “is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3-4).<sup>120</sup> Philip Towner observes,

The church has often understood the text to lay down a broad commission to pray for all people and for government leaders without really stipulating what direction such prayer ought to take. But the real concern . . . is for the prayer that supports the church’s universal mission to the world. That is, Paul urges Timothy to instruct the Ephesian church to reengage in an activity it had apparently been neglecting—prayer in support of Paul’s own mandate to take the gospel to the whole world.<sup>121</sup>

Paul exhorted Timothy to pray evangelistically for their political leaders.

God is pleased when churches pray for the salvation of “all people” or all kinds of people, not excluding any group from these prayers.<sup>122</sup> Believers should have the same desire as God, wanting all to be saved, even the men and women in government (1 Tim 2:3a).<sup>123</sup> Coming “to the knowledge of the truth” explains the process of salvation (1 Tim

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Inter-Varsity, 1990), 84.

<sup>119</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 169-70. Towner explains that “godliness” (εὐσεβείᾳ) was a term associated with worshipping various gods. True godliness, however, is the knowledge and conduct associated with faith in Jesus Christ. To be “dignified” (σεμνότητι) emphasizes the conduct that flows from being connected to Christ. Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 85, says the phrase “this is good” (τοῦτο καλὸν) in 1 Tim 2:3 refers back to the exhortation to pray in 1 Tim 2:1. See also Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 114; Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 85. Thus, praying for unbelievers is good “in the sight of God our Savior” (1 Tim 2:3).

<sup>121</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 163.

<sup>122</sup> Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 115.

<sup>123</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 86. First Tim 2:3 has theological implications pertaining to election. This debate, however, was not Paul’s focus. Ibid., 85. The apostle was combatting an exclusivity in which Jewish Christians downplayed the need to evangelize Gentiles. Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 177. That God desires “all men” to be saved emphasizes the need to evangelize everyone without exception.

2:3b). Moreover, God's desire is that unbelievers everywhere would embrace the apostolic message about His Son.<sup>124</sup>

First Timothy 2:1-4 exhorts the church to pray evangelistically for all kinds of people, not forgetting those in government. God is pleased when the prayers of His people for those in authority align His heart's desire that they be saved.

### **Conclusion**

According to Genesis 1-9, civil government has God-given authority to manage creation and to restrain evil. Government is accountable to God, which means that those in positions of authority are responsible to reflect God's standard of good and evil in their service. Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 teach that government must uphold good and punish evil.

How should God's people respond to their civil authorities? Since the Lord establishes all earthly authority, His people are called to submit and to pray for those in these positions (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17; and 1 Tim 2:1-4). The only exception to submission can be seen in Acts 5:29, where the apostles disobeyed their authorities in order to obey God.<sup>125</sup>

American Evangelicals have been politically involved throughout history. Chapter 3 surveys the history of evangelicals in the political arena. A biblical critique will follow in order to propose a more biblical philosophy of engagement.

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<sup>124</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 179.

<sup>125</sup> For further examples of civil disobedience, see Exod 1:15-21, 1 Kgs 18:1-4, Dan 6, Acts 4:1-21, Rev 13.

CHAPTER 3  
HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES  
PERTAINING TO A BIBLICAL RESPONSE  
TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Evangelicals have had a voice in politics throughout American history.<sup>1</sup> Some evangelicals, for instance, fought for abolition in the nineteenth century, and others called for social reform after the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Fundamentalists fought for Prohibition in the early twentieth century while decrying the teaching of evolution in public schools.<sup>3</sup> The “New Evangelicals” emerged as the century progressed, and by the end of the 1970s, they were standing for issues such as the sanctity of life.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter surveys the history of evangelicals in the political arena to understand how Christians have engaged government. A biblical critique will follow in order to suggest a philosophy of engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> The meaning of *evangelical* depends upon time period. The term referred to most Protestant Christians in the nineteenth century. However, with the rise of theological liberalism in the early twentieth century, *evangelical* narrowed to refer to a theologically conservative Protestant, a fundamentalist. The term expanded thereafter to take a more positive, inclusive tone by the 1940s. Thus, the “New Evangelical” would not be an old-school fundamentalist. See George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 234-35. David Bebbington’s definition captures the present diversity among evangelicals. Bebbington says an evangelical is someone who has had a conversion experience, seeks to express the gospel, has a particular regard for the Bible, and stresses the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 65-69.

<sup>3</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 191.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 241-43.

## A History of Evangelicals in the Political Arena

Though evangelicals have normally engaged government, political activism was not the movement's primary characteristic prior to the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Thus, this overview has been divided into two periods: before and after the 1970s.

### Prior to the 1970s

According to George Marsden, the "golden age" of American Evangelicalism was the late nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Revivals swept across the nation, political reforms powered the evangelical advance, and biblical imagery seemed to explain the age.<sup>7</sup> Most Americans were evangelical, and most evangelicals believed America was a Christian nation.<sup>8</sup>

Energized by the Second Great Awakening (1800-1830), evangelicals set their sights on perfecting American society.<sup>9</sup> They established new schools and fought for issues such as women's rights, prohibition, and the abolition of slavery.<sup>10</sup> Evangelicals in the North as well as the South sought to forge America into a righteous empire.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 232.

<sup>6</sup> According to Marsden, the "golden age" was 1865-1890. George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Marsden says advances were made against drinking, Sabbath-breaking, prostitution, Catholicism, and Freemasonry. Protestants often viewed the Civil War as an apocalyptic battle necessary to establish Christ's kingdom. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Corwin E. Smidt, *American Evangelicals Today* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 22. The leading revivalist of the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney, passionately urged the church to usher in the millennial kingdom via revival. See Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835), 282. As Finney's postmillennialism swept across America, evangelicals believed they could make the kingdom a physical reality. Thus, they devoted themselves to personal holiness as well as national perfection. See Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 44.

<sup>10</sup> Smidt, *American Evangelicals*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Marty argues that the basic thrust of eighteenth and nineteenth-century American Protestants was empire building. Martin Marty, *Protestantism in the United States: Righteous Empire* (New York: Scribner Book, 1986). Furthermore, Fitzgerald

However, the empire that nineteenth-century evangelicals longed to see never became a reality.<sup>12</sup> Immigration brought a surge of non-evangelicals and unchurched masses to America after the Civil War. Poverty increased as cities grew with the Industrial Revolution.<sup>13</sup> The moral consensus of the nation was shifting, new social problems were arising, and Scripture itself was suddenly being viewed with skepticism.<sup>14</sup>

By the 1870s, evangelicalism had fractured. Some evangelicals renewed their social and political efforts.<sup>15</sup> Yet, conservatives believed only the gospel could address the nation's mounting problems—political involvement would do little.<sup>16</sup> Linda Smith says that, among conservative evangelicals, “all progressive social concern, private as well as political, was nearly eliminated” following the Civil War.<sup>17</sup> The gospel alone

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insightfully differentiates evangelicalism in the North versus the South. Charles Finney impacted evangelicalism throughout the nation, but his calls for abolition were not received the same. Southern evangelicals responded by emphasizing the “spirituality of the church.” Thus, Southern evangelicalism tended to be a revivalist movement concerned about personal holiness. Evangelicals in the North generally supported abolition and became increasingly concerned about social action. See Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 52-54.

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 79.

<sup>13</sup> Smidt, *American Evangelicals*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See also Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 32-35.

<sup>15</sup> David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Reconciling Evangelicalism and Social Concern* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 30. See also Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 53; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 86.

<sup>16</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 39-44, says conservative evangelicals also renewed the call for personal perfection (Wesleyan), and some looked to Pentecostalism for greater manifestations of God's Spirit.

<sup>17</sup> Linda Smith, “Recent Historical Perspective of the Evangelical Tradition,” in *Christian Relief and Development: Developing Workers for Effective Ministry*, ed. Edgar Elliston (Dallas: Word, 1989), 25. See also Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 86. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 96, writes that conservatives did continue to fight against gambling and alcohol or work for Sabbath legislation. The point is that while liberal evangelicals emphasized action, conservatives emphasized the gospel. See also Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 26-31.

would solve the nation's problems.<sup>18</sup>

Whether church leaders emphasized action or the gospel, the clear majority of evangelicals were unconcerned.<sup>19</sup> This attitude changed after World War I (1914-1917) when American patriotism surged against an anti-German fury.<sup>20</sup> Conservatives became militantly opposed to any hint of theological liberalism. T. L. M. Spencer expressed his fear: "The new theology has the 'Made in Germany' mark upon it. . . . The new theology has led Germany into barbarism, and it will lead any nation into the same demoralization."<sup>21</sup>

Evangelicals who militantly opposed liberalism in its theological and culture manifestations became known as "fundamentalists" by the 1920s.<sup>22</sup> For them, the very survival of Christian civilization in America was at stake.<sup>23</sup> Thus, fundamentalists suddenly arose to fight for the moral and religious purity of the country.<sup>24</sup> They supported anti-

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<sup>18</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 98-99, explains that a total of three million booklets of "The Fundamentals" had been produced and freely sent to pastors. Yet, the booklets had been largely unnoticed. See also Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 51-53. Marsden states, "Few clergy could resist the overwhelming patriotic impulse that swept the country" during WWI. Germany was viewed as an evil nation of "bloodthirsty and barbaric huns." *Ibid.*, 53. Billy Sunday preached that "Christianity and Patriotism are synonymous terms . . . and hell and traitors are synonymous" as well. *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> T. L. M. Spencer, "Reforms to be Aided," *The Sabbath Recorder* 85, no. 18 (November 1918): 558.

<sup>22</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 57. See also Smidt, *American Evangelicals*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 113. See also Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 61.

<sup>24</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 112. William G. McLoughlin, Jr., shows how Billy Sunday used his revivals to link biblical Christianity with American safety. He used the fear of foreigners and sensationalism to move his audiences to action. For examples, see William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism* (New York: Ronald Press, 1959), 443-44.



immigration laws, decried the spread of Communism, fought for Prohibition, condemned evolution, and ensured that women could vote.<sup>25</sup>

However, towering over all fundamentalist fears in the 1920s was the promotion of biological evolution.<sup>26</sup> Leaders such as William Jennings Bryan, for instance, believed evolution was the root cause of all evil in America.<sup>27</sup> Thus, fundamentalists formed anti-evolution organizations and engaged the political arena to fight every hint of evolutionary theory in public schools.<sup>28</sup>

When the fight against evolution failed, fundamentalists suffered a tremendous defeat. They pulled away from politics and into isolation.<sup>29</sup> Carl F. H. Henry lamented in the 1940s that “no voice is speaking today as Paul would, either at the United Nations sessions, or at labor-management disputes, or in strategic university classrooms whether in Japan or Germany or America.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 113. The Eighteenth Amendment banned the sale of alcohol, while the Nineteenth gave women the right to vote. Conservative evangelicals united with liberals and some Catholics to support Prohibition. See Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 53.

<sup>26</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 59.

<sup>27</sup> William Jennings Bryan declared, “All ills from which America suffers can be traced back to the teaching of evolution.” William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway, 1996), 13. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 126, says that W. B. Riley and many other fundamentalist leaders agreed with Bryan’s assessment.

<sup>28</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 116, 133. This battle for the schools culminated in the Scopes Trial of 1925. For an overview of the trial and its significance, see Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 133-42.

<sup>29</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 60-61. The Presidential election of 1928 was an exception. Fundamentalists rallied against candidate Al Smith since he was a Catholic. From this election to the 1960s, conservative Protestants as a whole “remained on the fringes of American politics.” *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>30</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 34.

By the 1950s fundamentalists emerged as two groups: those who desired to remain isolated from an ungodly culture and those who desired to engage it with the gospel. The former retained the designation of “fundamentalist,” while the later became known as “neo-evangelical.”<sup>31</sup> Political activism was not a dominant feature of either group, but strict fundamentalists and neo-evangelicals were not altogether silent. Both, for instance, condemned Communism as the prime threat to America.<sup>32</sup> Both groups also believed that national prosperity rested upon national revival.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike fundamentalists, the new evangelicals had few doctrinal tests. They tended to fellowship with all who viewed the Bible as the sole authority in religion and Jesus as the only means of salvation.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Southern Baptists, Episcopal charismatics, and some theological liberals could unite and find fellowship.<sup>35</sup> Corwin Smidt explains,

The sexual revolution of the 1960s, along with the feminist and gay rights movements growing out of the decade, challenged basic cultural understandings among evangelicals. And the 1963 decision of the Supreme Court that reciting prayers in public schools was unconstitutional, along with its decision in 1973 to legalize abortion, only further contributed to an understanding that American society and public life was losing its moral bearings.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Smidt, *American Evangelicals*, 34. Strict separatists, such as Bob Jones Sr., and John Rice, were representative of fundamentalists in the 1940s and 1950s. Billy Graham and Harold Ockenga were representative of the new evangelicals. See Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 189-90.

<sup>32</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 210. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 180, explains that Billy Graham “rarely failed to bring up the threat of Communism, atomic weapons, and World War III” in his revivals. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 286, says fundamentalists such as John Norris, John Rice, and Bob Jones Sr. also condemned Communism during the 1950s.

<sup>33</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 185-86. Billy Graham believed that national health rested upon a national awakening to Christ. Graham commonly made charges to his hearers, such as, “If you would be a loyal American, then become a loyal Christian.” *Ibid*, 186.

<sup>34</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 65, 73.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> Smidt, *American Evangelicals*, 37.

The moral decline of America in the 1950s added a sense of urgency for Christians to come together.<sup>37</sup> Theological distinctions began to diminish during this time.

By the 1970s, the new evangelicals, and even most fundamentalists, believed they must respond.<sup>38</sup> They only needed leaders who could harness their energy and mobilize them into a political force to take back America.

### **After the 1970s**

With the exception of the Prohibition movement, evangelicals never mobilized on a large scale.<sup>39</sup> From Charles Finney to D. L. Moody to Billy Graham, evangelicalism and evangelistic revivals went hand-in-hand.<sup>40</sup> Even future architects of the Christian Right advocated evangelism, not political activism, until the mid-1970s.<sup>41</sup>

According to *The New York Times*, the “sharp moral decline” of American society in the 1960s and 1970s moved evangelicals toward political activism.<sup>42</sup> US Senator

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<sup>37</sup> Smidt writes that Billy Graham had helped foster an ecumenism among Protestants that made them comfortable working with one another. Smidt, *American Evangelicals*, 36.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37. Many preachers sounded the alarm regarding the moral demise of America. Frank Norris, John Rice, Jerry Falwell, and Bob Jones, Sr., are examples of fundamentalist leaders. Billy Graham was a neo-evangelical leader who often decried the moral ills of America. See Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 286.

<sup>39</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 232. Marsden explains that by the 1960s, only strict fundamentalists or ecclesiastical separatists, preferred the term “fundamentalist.” Neo-evangelicals and fundamentalistic evangelicals now used the term *evangelical*. A fundamentalistic evangelical is willing to break fellowship on theological issues, yet he is willing to set theological divisions aside in order to work on moral and cultural issues. *Ibid.*, 233-35.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> After the Selma-Montgomery marches in 1965, Jerry Falwell said, “I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and begin doing anything else—including fighting Communism, or participating in civil-rights reforms.” Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 285-86. Pat Robertson said in 1973, “I’m not political in thinking but spiritual—except that I hope Bible-believing people will be placed in positions of political responsibility.” Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31.

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth A. Briggs, “Evangelicals Turning to Politics Fear Moral Slide

John Anderson (R-IL) called evangelicals to engage the political arena, saying, “We cannot afford to be silent” anymore.<sup>43</sup> The Watergate scandal caused evangelicals such as Pat Robertson to be silent no more.<sup>44</sup>

Robertson had said in the 1960s that God would not allow him to endorse any political candidate—including his own father, a US Senator.<sup>45</sup> Yet, with the prospect of an evangelical Christian in the White House, he favorably covered Jimmy Carter on the *700 Club*.<sup>46</sup> Robertson believed that Carter, if elected, would appoint evangelicals to public positions, thereby helping to save the country. Carter lent no support after being elected, which pushed Robertson further into political activism.<sup>47</sup>

As Carter and Ford, two “born again” Christians, sparred on the national stage, *Newsweek* believed 1976 had become “the year of the evangelical.”<sup>48</sup> Robertson called evangelicals to engage the political arena while Jerry Falwell traveled the nation on an “I Love America” tour. Patriotism enveloped the tour as Falwell called evangelicals

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Imperils Nation,” *The New York Times*, August 18, 1980, A-17.

<sup>43</sup> See Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. According to the managing editor of *Christianity Today*, “The post-Watergate evangelical recovery brought out a feeling long latent that evangelicals should attempt to take a stronger hand in the affairs of the country, especially through political avenues.” *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>45</sup> Daniel K. Williams, *God’s Own Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 180.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-81. In 1979, Robertson urged Christians “to regularly vote, work within parties, attend caucuses . . . to write letters, make telephone calls, lobby for legislation, and pray for their leaders.” Pat Robertson, “A Christian Action Plan for the 1980s,” *Biblical Economics Today* 2, no. 6 (December/January 1980): 16. Robertson also said, “Christians should not hesitate to use the lawful power at their disposal to secure reversal of onerous Supreme Court decisions.” *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Ken Woodward, “Born Again!” *Newsweek*, October 25, 1976, 68-78. Both Ford and Carter claimed to be born again. See Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 41, 46-47.

everywhere to “bear the burden of revival” and save America.<sup>49</sup> Evangelicals had heard calls for national revivals from Billy Graham since the 1950s.<sup>50</sup> They had not heard such calls from Jerry Falwell.<sup>51</sup> Falwell, unlike Graham, would lead evangelicals to try to revive America through politics.<sup>52</sup>

The stories of Falwell and Robertson demonstrate on a small scale some of the ways that evangelicalism was changing. Both men were fundamentalist ministers who initially avoided political activism.<sup>53</sup> The moral state of America caused them to rethink their position. By the late 1970s, they and a growing number of evangelicals had rethought their position and became fully engaged in the political arena.

Falwell and Robertson spearheaded vast political rallies and led coalitions of Catholics, Mormons, and Jews to unite with evangelicals.<sup>54</sup> Paul Weyrich, a Catholic, explained how this was possible: “The new political philosophy must be defined by us in

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<sup>49</sup> See Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 288-89. Falwell was already known throughout America due to his ever-expanding radio and television presence. *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Fitzgerald shows how Billy Graham strengthened the connection between religion and patriotism. *Ibid.*, 169. See also Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 10-11. Fitzgerald also shows how Graham regularly spoke about politics. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 178-79.

<sup>51</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 290.

<sup>52</sup> The Moral Majority was founded in 1979, to organize conservative Christians to fight against national sins. See Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 59. Falwell credited Francis Schaeffer for turning him into a political activist. *Ibid.*, 53. According to Harold Brown, “The 1973 decision of the United States Supreme Court mandating abortion on demand, *Roe v. Wade* was a kind of spark in the powderkeg for Schaeffer.” Harold O. J. Brown, “Standing Against the World,” in *Francis Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1986), 23. Schaeffer’s *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979) was a major step in mobilizing evangelicals for political action. See Stephen J. Wellum, “Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984): Lessons from his Thought and Life,” *SBJT* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 6; see also Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 52-53.

<sup>53</sup> See also Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 324-25, which shows a similar change in the ministry of Tim LaHaye.

<sup>54</sup> Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 60.

moral terms, packaged in non-religious language, and propagated throughout the country by our new coalition.”<sup>55</sup> Francis Schaeffer added his support when he explained to Falwell that “God used pagans to do his work in the Old Testament, so why don’t you use pagans to do your work now?”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the battle to save America was not theological, but moral.<sup>57</sup>

By the election of 1980, evangelicals had grown comfortable working with Catholics in the political arena.<sup>58</sup> As the movement quickly grew beyond evangelicalism, “Christian Right” became a new label for the socially conservative, generally evangelical organizations found in politics.<sup>59</sup>

President Ronald Reagan developed a relationship with the Christian Right, and evangelicals voted for him in solidarity in 1980 and 1984.<sup>60</sup> Ed Dobson explains that

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<sup>55</sup> Paul Weyrich, “Moral Majority,” undated, box 19, folder 17, Paul M. Weyrich Papers, 10138, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming. Weyrich co-founded the Heritage Foundation in 1973.

<sup>56</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 197. Schaeffer believed evangelicals should be “co-belligerents” with anyone willing to stand alongside them—theological and religious differences should not matter. According to Ed Dobson, Schaeffer’s co-belligerency was “the underlying ideology” for the Christian Right. See Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 53.

<sup>57</sup> Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming Revell, 1980), 187.

<sup>58</sup> Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 58, lists other evangelical organizations formed by 1980: Moral Majority, Christian Voice, Christian Embassy, and Religious Roundtable. Miller explains the Christian Right as “a movement propelled by evangelicals but also containing sympathetic Catholics, Mormons, and a handful of Jewish allies.” *Ibid.*, 60. For further definition, see *ibid.*, 64. Don Sweeting provides ten reasons for the rise of ecumenism between evangelicals and Catholics in the latter half of the twentieth century. Don Sweeting, “Changing American Evangelical Attitudes towards Roman Catholics: 1960-2000” *SBJT* 5, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 20-33.

<sup>59</sup> According to Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 6-7, the Christian Right included fundamentalist Baptists, Pentecostals, Southern Baptists, and soon included conservative Catholics. For specific organizations, see chap. 3, n67.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-6.

President Reagan made the Right feel it finally had a voice in Washington.<sup>61</sup> Yet, Dobson would later say that though Reagan “gave us credibility, he ultimately did nothing in terms of our long-term agendas, and especially the issue of human life.”<sup>62</sup>

The lack of progress mattered little, however. According to Daniel Williams, “Reagan might not have been able to give the Christian Right the moral legislation that it wanted, but the Christian Right would give Reagan the endorsement that he needed.”<sup>63</sup>

Paul Weyrich assessed in the 1980s that the Right was willing to set aside its agenda in order to “safeguard meaningless access.”<sup>64</sup>

Disillusioned with the Republican Party, Pat Robertson created the Christian Coalition in 1989.<sup>65</sup> As opposed to the Moral Majority, Robertson’s organization was not led by a pastor but by a political expert, Ralph Reed.<sup>66</sup> The Christian Coalition distributed tens of millions of voter guides for “pro-family” issues.<sup>67</sup> Reed was so successful that by

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<sup>61</sup> Ed Dobson explained that upon Reagan’s election, “We go from being on the outside, that nobody cares about us, to being invited up to the big house.” See David Belton, dir., *God in America*, DVD (Arlington, VA: PBS, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Williams writes that though the Reagan administration had more evangelicals than any prior administration, they held little influence. Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 196. Paul Weyrich’s frustration grew to the point that he said, “The religious right was sweet-talked.” Ibid., 197. For an overview of Reagan’s accomplishments for the Christian Right, see *ibid.*, 202-5.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 205. Williams says the Christian Right had registered another 3.5 million conservative voters from the election of 1980 to 1984. See also Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 76.

<sup>64</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 223. Following disappointment with Reagan, the Christian Right attempted to elect one of its own in 1988, Pat Robertson. For a detailed account of Robertson’s bid for the Presidency, see Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 380-90.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 107.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>67</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 414. According to Fitzgerald, the Coalition’s voter guides “clearly favored their candidates and often distorted the records of their opponents.” Ibid. Regarding Reed’s ecumenism, Miller says that Reed did not want the name “Christian Coalition” due to its exclusivity. See Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 109.

1994, the Christian vote had become to Republicans what organized labor had been to Democrats.<sup>68</sup> Ironically, the Right had few political victories throughout the 1990s.<sup>69</sup>

Following the impeachment of President Clinton, evangelicals paused to reflect on their efforts. Gary Bauer, for instance, realized “there is virtually nothing to show for an 18-year commitment” to the Republican Party.<sup>70</sup> Cal Thomas, who had once led the Moral Majority with Ed Dobson, lamented that evangelicals had “confused political power with God’s power.”<sup>71</sup> Thomas and Dobson also came to believe that the Christian Right succeeded in alienating unbelievers from the gospel.<sup>72</sup>

While some evangelicals abandoned the Christian Right, others became determined to fight harder.<sup>73</sup> James Dobson was one of these evangelicals. His organization, Focus on the Family, emerged in the late 1990s as the chief political platform for evangelicals.<sup>74</sup> Where leaders such as Reed, Robertson, or even Falwell had been

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<sup>68</sup> Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 230.

<sup>69</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 415, says the Christian Right requested President George H. W. Bush to nominate Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Other than this, the Right had few accomplishments in the 1990s. Fitzgerald also says that evangelicals flooded Christian Right organizations with support throughout the 1990s. *Ibid.*, 420. According to Miller, the Christian Right lost some of its leaders following the impeachment of President Clinton. For instance, Ed Dobson and Cal Thomas questioned the tactics used by the Christian Right. Paul Weyrich went so far as to declare the Christian Right a failure. See Miller, *Age of Evangelicals*, 118. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 433-34, explains that the Senate’s vote to acquit Clinton left the Christian Right in disarray and defeated.

<sup>70</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 454. Bauer was President of the Family Research Council from 1988 to 1999.

<sup>71</sup> Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 187.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>73</sup> Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 244.

<sup>74</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 445.



willing to compromise, Dobson was a hardliner who rarely budged.<sup>75</sup> Dobson quoted Scripture in the political arena and spoke of God, though he avoided theological precision.<sup>76</sup>

The Right regained its stride with the presidency of George W. Bush, who surrounded himself with evangelical advisors.<sup>77</sup> Bush also appointed more conservative Christians than any of his predecessors.<sup>78</sup> Yet, as Daniel Williams states, little of the Right's political influence had any effect upon American culture.<sup>79</sup> Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner, who served within the Bush Administration, argue that the politicization of Christianity actually created a backlash against it.<sup>80</sup>

Evangelicals had strongly identified with President Bush, a president who left office with a broken economy and widespread disapproval. According to David Fitch, American culture had turned against evangelicals as it had turned against President Bush.<sup>81</sup> Looking back on his ministry, James Dobson said in 2009,

We tried to defend the unborn child, the dignity of the family, but it was a holding action. . . . We are awash in evil, and the battle is still to be waged. We are right now in the most discouraging period of that long conflict. Humanly speaking, we can say we have lost all those battles.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 447.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, *God's Own Party*, 252.

<sup>78</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 464.

<sup>79</sup> Williams, *God's Own Party*, 245.

<sup>80</sup> Gerson and Wehner write, "The religious right, it turns out, was not good for religion." Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner, *City of Man* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 61.

<sup>81</sup> David E. Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism?* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 2-3.

<sup>82</sup> Alex Spillius, "US Religious Right Concedes Defeat," *The Telegraph*, April 10, 2009, accessed April 19, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/5136050/US-religious-Right-concedes-defeat.html>.

By the end of President Bush’s second term, despair had taken hold of the Right.

Conservative evangelicals were largely inactive during the Obama presidency.<sup>83</sup> Yet, with the prospect of one who would listen and work to restore America, the evangelical vote surged in 2016 to support Donald Trump.<sup>84</sup> In the eyes of many, such as Jerry Falwell, Jr., evangelicals had finally “found their dream president.”<sup>85</sup> Such overt support for so immoral a candidate caused evangelicals, such as Michael Gerson, to conclude “little remains of a distinctly Christian public witness.”<sup>86</sup>

Evangelicals have long desired to see America become a light to the nations, though the means shifted in the 1970s from emphasizing evangelism to political activism. Regardless, evangelicals have lacked a biblical philosophy for engaging government. A more biblical philosophy is needed moving forward.

### **A Biblical Philosophy for Engaging Civil Government**

A biblical philosophy for engaging civil government must have at least the following five principles:

1. A biblical concept of civil government.
2. A biblical attitude toward political leaders.
3. A biblical foundation for political positions.

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<sup>83</sup> Fitch, *End of Evangelicalism*, 2-3.

<sup>84</sup> The evangelical vote for President Trump in 2016 was higher than the evangelical vote for Presidents Reagan or George W. Bush. See Michael Gerson, “Trump and the Evangelical Temptation,” *The Atlantic*, April 2018, accessed April 19, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/04/the-last-temptation/554066/>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* Gerson identifies Franklin Graham, David Jeremiah, and Tony Perkins as other evangelicals who strongly support President Trump. Regarding Falwell’s statement, Gerson believes it “says something about the current quality of evangelical dreams.” *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

4. A biblical unity in the political arena.
5. A biblical mission for political action.

These principles will be explained and a system constructed from which a biblical philosophy for engaging civil government will emerge.

### **A Biblical Concept of Civil Government**

God ordained the institution of government to manage creation and to provide order by upholding good and punishing evil.<sup>87</sup> Yet, evangelicals have also wanted their government to shape or to change society. The goal of Prohibition, for instance, was not merely to take a stand against drunkenness but to prevent society as a whole from changing.<sup>88</sup> James Timberlake explains Prohibition as evangelicals using “the secular power of the state to transform culture.”<sup>89</sup>

Thomas Pinney says, “The bold idea of amending the U.S. Constitution was first revealed in 1876, when the newly formed National Prohibition Party made it a plank in its platform.”<sup>90</sup> The National Prohibition Party (1869) lost strength, but the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (1874) and the Anti-Saloon League (1895) continued the fight for Prohibition until the Eighteenth Amendment passed in 1919.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See chap. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 13. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 112, explains that Prohibition was “part of the reaction against Catholics, immigrants, and labor unions.”

<sup>89</sup> James H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 7.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Pinney, *A History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 433.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 13, says the National Prohibition Party and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union were founded by evangelicals. According to Ernest Cherrington, the Anti-Saloon League was founded to “unite all Christian forces against the liquor traffic.” See Ernest Hurst Cherrington, *History of the Anti-Saloon League* (Westerville, OH: The American Issue Publishing, 1913), 10.

Leading up to Prohibition, Moody's *The Institute Tie* featured an editorial proclaiming that "revival is in the air."<sup>92</sup> What was the reason for such optimism? The editors explained that churches were awakening, government was becoming "cleaner," and "more than one half the area of the United States is governed by some sort of prohibition law."<sup>93</sup> The view expressed in this editorial is similar to the view of Billy Sunday and others: America needs government to help transform society.

The Eighteenth Amendment federally banned "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors."<sup>94</sup> Yet, society's demand for alcohol soared throughout the years of Prohibition (1919-1933).<sup>95</sup> Even church-going Protestants who had initially supported Prohibition began to consume alcohol.<sup>96</sup> George Marsden explains, "Despite the passage of Prohibition, then, the battle to enforce traditional Victorian and Methodistic mores was a losing one."<sup>97</sup>

Has government ever transformed society? Michael Horton has asked this question, and he does not believe this has ever happened. Horton writes, "Politics is the place where the ideas that have already shaped society find their legislative applications."<sup>98</sup> In the case of Prohibition, evangelicals expected government to shape an unwilling society, but society reshaped government to overturn Prohibition.

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<sup>92</sup> "Hopeful Signs for 1908," *The Institute Tie* 8 (January 1908): 345.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> "Eighteenth Amendment," Cornell Law School, accessed April 21, 2018, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxviii>.

<sup>95</sup> Pinney, *History of Wine*, 438, explains that with the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, the price of grapes increased tenfold. From 1919 to 1926, the acres of land in California devoted to viticulture doubled.

<sup>96</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 144.

<sup>97</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 56.

<sup>98</sup> Michael S. Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 55. For further explanation, see *ibid.*, 278-79.

Evangelicals in the political arena must understand that God never intended government to be the means of transforming a nation. Evangelicals may have called for laws against drunkenness, for instance, but they should have done so as Christians concerned that government act in a manner God intends—to uphold good and to punish evil. When evangelicals misunderstand the role of government, they may expect this institution to do what it cannot and find they have labored in vain.

### **A Biblical Attitude toward Political Leaders**

The fight for Prohibition did not end as evangelicals had hoped, but this fight was hardly the last that would not end well. In more recent decades, the Christian Right has engaged government, and at times, has had great control of the Republican Party. Yet, similar to Prohibition evangelicals, the Right has not been able to change society.<sup>99</sup> Evangelicals of the 1980s and 1990s saw few legislative victories, while the attitude of society on family issues only became more liberal.<sup>100</sup> Who was to blame for the lack of progress? The Right largely blamed government.

James Dobson, for instance, excoriated Republican leaders in the late 1990s, threatening that if they do not listen he would abandon the Party and “do everything I can to take as many people with me as possible.”<sup>101</sup> Ralph Reed explained his tactics for dealing with political leaders as “guerilla warfare.”<sup>102</sup> Pat Robertson concluded that government had become “a weapon the anti-Christian forces now use against Christians

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<sup>99</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 434.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Laurie Goodstein, “Conservative Christian Leader Accuses Republicans of Betrayal,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 1998, accessed April 21, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/02/12/us/conservative-christian-leader-accuses-republicans-of-betrayal.html>. See also Jacob Weisberg, “Dobson’s Choice,” *Slate*, May 9, 1998, accessed April 21, 2018, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/strange\\_bedfellow/1998/05/dobsons\\_choice.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/strange_bedfellow/1998/05/dobsons_choice.html).

<sup>102</sup> Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 230.

and religious people.”<sup>103</sup>

Evangelical contempt eventually turned to the Judicial Branch.<sup>104</sup> Leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Tony Perkins condemned the federal judiciary at the 2005 conference, “Confronting the Judicial War on Faith.”<sup>105</sup> Perkins accused the judiciary of being a greater threat than terrorism, while Alan Keyes called it “the focus of evil.”<sup>106</sup> Dobson went so far as to compare the Supreme Court with the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>107</sup>

The Christian Right has often viewed political leaders as enemies to be fought rather than as “God’s servant for your good” (Rom 13:4). Since God appoints each person who serves in government, God’s people have no right to harbor sinful attitudes against His appointments. Both Paul and Peter taught that submission to authority is normative to the Christian life (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13).<sup>108</sup>

What is submission? Submission involves doing good or being a blessing to political authorities, showing them “honor” (1 Pet 2:13-17). Paul exhorted Timothy that praying for the salvation of “all who are in high positions” is good (1 Tim 2:2-3). Russell Moore provides some necessary context:

As the apostle Paul urges us to obey and honor the “governing authorities” we must remember that he is not speaking of a political system consistent with ‘traditional

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<sup>103</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 413.

<sup>104</sup> Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 264, says control of the judiciary had become “the Christian Right’s Holy Grail” in the early 2000s.

<sup>105</sup> Michelle Goldberg, “In Theocracy They Trust,” Salon, April 11, 2005, accessed April 21, 2018, [https://www.salon.com/2005/04/11/judicial\\_conference/](https://www.salon.com/2005/04/11/judicial_conference/).

<sup>106</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 513. Phyllis Schlafly referred to Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy as “the poster boy for impeachment.”

<sup>107</sup> Debra Rosenberg, “The War on Judges,” Newsweek, April 24, 2005, accessed April 22, 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/war-judges-116067>.

<sup>108</sup> For an explanation of biblical submission, see chap. 2, n39, which differentiates submission and obedience.

values.’ He was speaking of a bloodthirsty and pagan Caesar, a government directly responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>109</sup>

Submission does not silence believers from engaging their political leaders. Rather, a submissive heart produces God-honoring attitudes and actions when believers do decide to engage their leaders. Hearts “submissive to rulers and authorities” produce people who “speak evil of no one” in the political arena (Titus 3:1).

### **A Biblical Foundation for Political Positions**

While campaigning in 1980, an exasperated President Jimmy Carter declared, “The Bible doesn’t say how you balance the federal budget.”<sup>110</sup> Evangelicals may not have told the president how to balance the budget, but they had declared the mind of God on numerous political issues.<sup>111</sup> Michael Horton alleges that leaders in the Christian Right during the 1980s “raised even the most debatable policy positions (such as the Panama Canal give-away and the Strategic Defense Initiative or ‘Star Wars’) to the level of transcendent biblical absolutes.”<sup>112</sup> Horton is correct. The Bible has no clear position on President Reagan’s handling of the Panama Canal or whether his Strategic Defense Initiative pleased the Lord.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Russell Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 154.

<sup>110</sup> Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 62.

<sup>111</sup> Tim LaHaye, for instance, had connected big government with secular humanism in his 1980 work, *The Battle for the Mind*. Jerry Falwell warned against a weak military and spoke against progressive taxation in the late 1970s. See Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 176.

<sup>112</sup> Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars*, 17-18.

<sup>113</sup> From Illinois politics, The Illinois Family Institute (IFI) works to “advance public morality consistent with Biblical Christianity.” The Illinois Family Institute, “About,” accessed April 24, 2018, <https://illinoisfamily.org/about/>. Though IFI may advance public morality, the Bible does not have a clear position underlying some of their advocacy. For instance, John Biver of IFI argued that Christians should be against “net neutrality” and quoted Rush Limbaugh for support. John Biver, “‘Net Neutrality’ in Illinois: Just One More Leftist Act of Deception,” Illinois Family Institute, April 17, 2018, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://illinoisfamily.org/politics/net-neutrality-in-illinois-just-one-more-leftist-act-of-deception/>. As a second example, Laurie Higgins of IFI wrote an

Margaret Mitchell of the University of Chicago studied several Christian Right organizations. She concluded that while conservative evangelicals affirm the authority of the Bible, they rarely use the Bible to support their political positions.<sup>114</sup> When the Bible is used, support is debatable. For instance, many conservative evangelicals supported President Trump’s announcement that the United States will recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Yet, Gary Burge of Calvin Theological Seminary, reminds, “When you build a bridge from biblical Israel to modern Israel, there is an enormous gap in history and theology.”<sup>115</sup> Thus, a biblical mandate for Jerusalem as the capital of modern Israel is not as biblical as it may seem at first.

The Christian Right claims to be biblical, though biblical support for its positions is often absent or strained.<sup>116</sup> C. Ben Mitchell issues an important reminder: “Transforming culture demands that Christians enter the public square with their Christian worldview intact.”<sup>117</sup> Mitchell elaborates,

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article condemning student-led protests to gun violence. Laurie Higgins, “Leftist Anti-Gun Protest in Government Schools,” Illinois Family Institute, March 8, 2018, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://illinoisfamily.org/education/leftist-political-protest-schools-next-week/>.

<sup>114</sup> Margaret M. Mitchell, “How Biblical Is the Christian Right?” (paper submitted to the Religion & Culture Forum, The University of Chicago: May 2006), 9-10. Mitchell examined an abundance of Christian Right websites over the course of a year to reach this conclusion.

<sup>115</sup> Tom Gjelten, “To Some Zionist Christians and Jews, the Bible Says Jerusalem Is Israel’s Capital,” *NPR*, December 9, 2017, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2017/12/09/569553464/to-some-zionist-christians-and-jews-the-bible-says-jerusalem-is-israels-capital>.

<sup>116</sup> Mitchell alleges that Focus on the Family’s “Citizen Link” had a range of political topics with a near absence of biblical support. Citizen Link is now called “Family Policy Alliance,” and Mitchell’s allegation remains true. See Mitchell, “How Biblical Is the Christian Right?,” 12. Family Policy Alliance states that it seeks “to unleash biblical citizenship and protect families and Christian values.” Family Policy Alliance, “New Name-Same Mission,” accessed May 22, 2018, <https://familypolicyalliance.com/citizenlink-becoming-family-policy-alliance/>. The site, however, makes little mention of the Bible.

<sup>117</sup> C. Ben Mitchell, forum discussion on “How May Evangelical Theology Transform Culture?” *SBJT* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 82. Similarly, Carl F. H. Henry warned, “There is no justification for evangelical attempt at solution in non-redemptive



Therefore, when we talk about cloning technology, for instance, Christians must explain that human beings are made uniquely in the image of God. When we discuss legislation on assisted suicide and euthanasia, we must deal with the biblical prohibition against unjust killing. When we talk about divorce, we must talk not only about the negative impact on children, but about God's ideal for marriage as a one-man-one-woman-one-flesh relationship for life.<sup>118</sup>

Evangelicals must show that the Bible is foundational to their positions. God's Word is the Christian's sole authority.

A mistake that evangelicals have made is to posit a position as biblical without proving their position is biblical. The lack of a biblical foundation has left the Christian Right without a distinctly Christian identity.

### **A Biblical Unity in the Political Arena**

Michael Lindsay praises evangelicalism for its "ability to maintain a core set of convictions without being so rigid that it cannot cooperate with others who do not share them."<sup>119</sup> Conservative evangelicals, for instance, united with theological liberals and Catholics in the fight for Prohibition.<sup>120</sup> In more recent decades, they have been willing to unite as co-belligerents on issues such as the sanctity of life or marriage. Lindsay believes evangelicals have an "elastic orthodoxy" that allows them to unite and advance political causes without "a blurring of the lines that make Christianity distinctive."<sup>121</sup>

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frameworks." Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 73.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 216.

<sup>120</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 53.

<sup>121</sup> Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 217. Lindsay's definition of an evangelical scarcely has doctrinal lines. He writes that evangelicals are "Christians who hold a particular regard for the Bible, embrace a personal relationship with God through a 'conversion' to Jesus Christ, and seek to lead others on a similar spiritual journey." Ibid., 4. Liberal and conservative Protestants, Mormons, and Catholics can all agree that the Bible is an authority. Yet, they do not agree how sinners are reconciled to God or even if Jesus is God. Thus, it is difficult to see how evangelical lines could become blurrier.

The Christian Right rests upon the idea that Christians must set aside their doctrinal differences to unite in a common cause.<sup>122</sup> Tim LaHaye has said this ideology is justified because the battle for America is not theological but moral.<sup>123</sup> Jerry Falwell, Jr., has agreed with LaHaye as evidenced in an exchange with Glenn Beck. Falwell said to Beck, who is a Mormon, “If we don’t hang together we’ll hang separately, I mean, that’s what my father believed when he formed the Moral Majority. . . . And there are bigger issues now, we can argue about theology later after we save the country.”<sup>124</sup>

Emphasizing action above theology has allowed the Christian Right to unite evangelicals with non-evangelicals to increase the movement’s size and influence.<sup>125</sup> Yet, in the absence of a shared theology, the Christian Right is shaped by the issues for which it fights. Moore explains,

We end up with a public witness in which Mormon talk-show hosts and serially-monogamous casino magnates and prosperity-gospel preachers are welcomed into our ranks, regardless of what violence they do to the gospel. They are, after all, “right on the issues.”<sup>126</sup>

Issues, not theology, have shaped the identity of the Christian Right.

Furthermore, the gospel is not the glue that binds the Right together. Those with a pure gospel can join with those of another gospel or no gospel at all in order to advance political causes. J. Gresham Machen thundered a century ago,

What a splendid cleaning up of the Gentile cities it would have been if the Judaizers had succeeded in extending to those cities the observance of the Mosaic law, even including the unfortunate ceremonial observances! Surely Paul ought to have made

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<sup>122</sup> Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 53.

<sup>123</sup> LaHaye, *Battle for the Mind*, 187.

<sup>124</sup> “Glenn Interviews Jerry Falwell, Jr.,” *The Glenn Beck Radio Program*, June 6, 2010.

<sup>125</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and Culture*, 247, says the Christian Right grew to the point of shaping the entire Republican Party of the 1990s.

<sup>126</sup> Moore, *Onward*, 32.

common cause with teachers who were so nearly in agreement with him; surely he ought to have applied to them the great principle of Christian unity.

As a matter of fact, however, Paul did nothing of the kind; and only because he (and others) did nothing of the kind does the Christian Church exist today.<sup>127</sup>

As opposed to the Christian Right, Paul understood that Christ is *the* issue.

In Romans 11:36, Paul magnified the Lord, exclaiming, “From Him and through Him and to Him are all things.” Even in the political arena, Christ is all. Since Christians are a people united to Jesus Christ (Rom 6:4-5), this unity must be treasured and not defiled by the fellowships that God’s people choose to cultivate.

### **A Biblical Mission for Political Action**

Horton states, “We can handle our situation in America in one of two ways. We can see it as a mission field, or as a battlefield, but our decision will determine our witness for decades to come.”<sup>128</sup> Evangelicals have long viewed America as a battlefield with conservatives set against liberals in a battle to save the nation.

Following WWI, Billy Sunday condemned alcohol as a threat to “Christian America.”<sup>129</sup> Leaders such as William Riley and Frank Norris agreed with Sunday.<sup>130</sup> Saving Christian America was the goal; eliminating alcohol was the means.<sup>131</sup> Though William Jennings Bryan emphasized a different means, his goal was no different. Bryan

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<sup>127</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 26. Machen also warned, “A man cannot possibly be an ‘evangelical’ or a ‘conservative’ (or, as he himself would say, simply a Christian) and regard the Cross of Christ as a trifle.” *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>128</sup> Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars*, 286.

<sup>129</sup> John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* (Louisville: John Knox, 2011), 32. Sunday often timed his revivals to end just prior to voters going to the polls on issues such as Prohibition. *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 100.

<sup>131</sup> Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 31-21.

fought passionately against evolution for the same reason as Sunday against alcohol. Evolution was, to Bryan, the greatest threat to America.<sup>132</sup>

Saving America was the mission of conservative evangelicals after WWI, and this is the mission of the Christian Right.<sup>133</sup> Jerry Falwell proclaimed, “The choice is ours, we must turn America around or prepare for inevitable destruction.”<sup>134</sup> Randall Terry has written, “If righteousness is going to prevail, if paganism is going to be turned back, then we must move to restore this nation to being a Christian nation. Otherwise we will lose the war for America’s soul, and the United States as we know it will perish.”<sup>135</sup>

Christians do have a battle in America, but the battle is “not against flesh and blood” (Eph 6:12). Voter registrations and mass rallies are not the church’s mission. Jesus sent His disciples to contend with the world by proclaiming a message. They were called to “make disciples” (Matt 28:18).

Moore says the church was “never given a mission to promote ‘values’ in the first place, but to speak instead of sin and of righteousness and judgment, of Christ and his kingdom.”<sup>136</sup> Speaking of sin and of righteousness shapes the way that political issues are discussed.

The Christian Right has opposed same-sex marriage partially on the grounds of religious liberty.<sup>137</sup> Christians are concerned that government may require pastors to

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<sup>132</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 126. Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 33, explains that fundamentalists feared “what would happen to Christian civilization in the United States if evolution was not outlawed.”

<sup>133</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and Culture*, 246, says evangelicals in the political arena have been driven by “the necessity of restoring America’s original Christian heritage.”

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>135</sup> Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars*, 115.

<sup>136</sup> Randall Terry, *Why Does a Nice Guy Like Me Keep Getting Thrown in Jail?* (n.p.: Resistance Press, 1993), 80-81.

<sup>137</sup> Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux, “The Christian Right Has A New Strategy on

sanction a homosexual wedding or businesses to serve a homosexual couple. These concerns are reasonable, but litigating for religious liberty is not the same as confronting the world of sin and calling sinners to Christ. Evangelicals must remember, as Machen understood a century ago, “If Christianity is anything, it is a way of getting rid of sin.”<sup>138</sup>

The political arena is not filled with enemies to battle but with lost men and women who need Jesus Christ. It is a mission field. In the words of Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, may the church “lay down its impotent weapons of political activism in exchange for the greatest force we have to change the world: the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>139</sup> Making disciples, even in the political arena, is the church’s mission.

### **Conclusion**

Evangelicalism has influenced political leaders and taken part in political issues throughout the history of America. The movement became highly organized in the political arena after the 1970s. Yet, evangelicalism before or after the 1970s has lacked a biblical philosophy of engagement.

A biblical philosophy for engaging the political arena involves the right concept of government. Governments do not exist to transform culture, nor are they able to do so. God created this institution to manage creation, to uphold good and punish evil. Since the Lord appoints all authority, His people should not cultivate contempt and anger toward those He has appointed. Rather, God’s people should cultivate a heart of submission that desires to honor, respect, and pray for those in authority.

A biblical philosophy of engagement also involves using the Bible. Positing a political position as biblical is not sufficient. God’s Word must be shown as foundational

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Gay Marriage,” *FiveThirtyEight*, December 5, 2017, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-christian-right-has-a-new-strategy-on-gay-marriage/>.

<sup>138</sup>Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 77.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas and Dobson, *Blinded by Might*, 195.

to politics, the lens through which to understand the issues. Thus, Jesus Christ, not politics, is the greatest issue for the church. God's people are united to one another in Christ forever, even as they enter the political arena with the mission of making disciples.

These principles provide a biblical foundation for local churches to develop programs that engage political leaders. Civil Servant Ministries (CSM) is an example in which the local church sends full-time missionaries to evangelize state lawmakers. Another example is Public Servants' Prayer (PSP), which exemplifies a local church ministry that utilizes social media to help believers pray for their political leaders.<sup>140</sup>

Many churches since the 1970s have desired to contact political leaders regarding politics. The five principles could guide church leaders as follows:

1. By providing a biblical concept of civil government, the first principle teaches that government is not the key to changing society. Why confront a lawmaker's political position? A biblical reason may be out of concern that God will hold that leader accountable for governing in ways that dishonor Him.
2. Since God appoints all leaders, the second principle challenges believers to submit to God's appointments. Church leaders should cultivate a humble, submissive spirit when engaging political leaders.
3. When church leaders urge their people to contact a lawmaker, the third principle necessitates a biblical framework. God's people must show that God's Word is clearly for or against the issue at hand. Thus, the issue is a matter of sin and righteousness.
4. A believer's union with Jesus Christ and other believers is a primary and not secondary issue. The fourth principle cautions church leaders from elevating politics to the point that they encourage their people to unite with those who preach another gospel.
5. The biblical mission of the church is to make disciples. The fifth principle shapes the entire goal for contacting a lawmaker. The hope is that this man or woman in political leadership may turn from sin and to Christ for salvation.

This is one example in which the local church may use the five principles to engage civil government. These principles provide a theological foundation, one that has often lacked

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<sup>140</sup> Public Servants' Prayer was founded in 2004 by Indiana minister Matthew Barnes. For more information, see Public Servant Prayer, accessed May 25, 2018, [www.publicservantsprayer.org](http://www.publicservantsprayer.org).

as evangelicals have entered the political arena. The following chapter will explain how this research project was implemented at Southern View Chapel.

CHAPTER 4  
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This ministry project was designed to teach a theology of civil government to select adults at Southern View Chapel. The project's first element was to develop an eight-week curriculum for evaluation by an expert panel. Each member of the panel utilized an evaluation rubric and was interviewed. Course curriculum was updated accordingly. The project's second element involved teaching an eight-week class. A pre-class survey was administered at the beginning of the first class followed by curriculum for week 1. Curriculum was distributed at the start of each subsequent class, and at the end of week 8 a post-class survey was administered. Throughout the duration of the class, all curriculum, PowerPoint slides, and lectures were made available online.

**Scheduling the Project**

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Developing the Curriculum |  |
| a. July 1, 2018              | Draft the Eight-Week Curriculum  |
| b. September 1, 2018         | Email Curriculum to Expert Panel<br>Email Evaluation Rubric to Expert Panel                        |
| c. September 24, 2018        | Conclude Interviews with Expert Panel<br>Collect Evaluation Rubric from Expert Panel               |
| d. September 30, 2018        | Update the Curriculum  |
| 2. Teaching the Class        |  |
| a. October 7, 2018           | Administer Pre-Class Survey<br>Distribute First Week of Curriculum<br>Teach First Week of Class    |
| b. November 25, 2018         | Teach Eighth Week of Class<br>Distribute Eighth Week of Curriculum<br>Administer Post-Class Survey |



## **Developing the Curriculum**

During the week of July 1, I developed a detailed outline of the eight-week class. Curriculum development followed this outline with each of the eight weeks of curriculum being five to six pages in length (see appendix 5). Curriculum included fill-in-the-blank components for participants to complete during each lecture. Question/answer and assignment components were utilized to encourage participants' after-class thought and action. A draft of the curriculum was completed by the end of August and sent to each member of the expert panel with the evaluation rubric (see appendix 2).

### **The Expert Panel**

The expert panel was comprised of six mature Christians who brought unique perspectives to the evaluation process. Evaluator 1 was a lobbyist who advocates for family values in Illinois, while evaluator 2 was an Illinois state lawmaker. These members of the panel were selected due to their experience in the political arena and their insight into the Christian Right.

Evaluator 3 was a pastor who was knowledgeable of the political arena and had a heart for reaching elected officials. Evaluator 4 was also a pastor, but one with a ministry to political leaders. These panel members added theological and spiritual insight to the curriculum.

Evaluator 5 had been an elder at Southern View Chapel as well as a member of the church for more than twenty-five years. His feedback helped tailor the curriculum to the audience at SVC. Evaluator 6 was a member of SVC and a Ph.D. candidate in American history. His feedback ensured the curriculum's historical accuracy.

Each member of the expert panel received the curriculum and evaluation rubric by September 1. Due to scheduling conflicts, the panel was not able to meet through conference call. Thus, I spoke with panel members individually to discuss each week of the curriculum and each section of the evaluation rubric (see appendix 2).

By the week of September 24, I had interviewed all six members of the expert panel and recorded their scores from the evaluation rubric (see appendix 3). All members of the panel said the curriculum was practical and that it encouraged prayer for political leaders. All members said the curriculum challenged their thinking as well.

Panel member 1, a lobbyist, said the curriculum could use more examples; namely, examples that are current. For example, he mentioned his testimony to an Illinois House committee on transgenderism. We discussed this issue and he encouraged me to mention it in class because “Christians have an obligation to speak up on this.” As a result, I modified the lecture for week 8.

Panel member 5, a former SVC elder, provided insight on how the eight-week class might be received at our church. For instance, he surveyed a dozen members at SVC on various questions. One, in particular, was my phrase, “The Five Pillars” in week 8 of the curriculum. Some church members thought of Islam and said the phrase could be a distraction. Thus, “The Five Pillars” became, “The Five Principles.”

Most panel members focused their interviews on week 4, “Disobedience: A Christian’s Last Resort.” I was surprised to find that all but one member of the panel agreed with my position on civil disobedience. This was encouraging, because a section of the curriculum focused upon the American Revolution. Specifically, was the revolution the only option for believers who wanted to worship God? Did King George III compel believers to sin? Panel member 2, a lawmaker, did not quite agree. He shared that being American is like “the Fourth of July and Apple Pie.” In other words, one cannot overstate the significance of the American Revolution. He asked, “If the revolution was unbiblical, does this invalidate all that follows?” We had a cordial conversation that reminded me to be careful when presenting this material in class. I did not change the curriculum, but I did become mindful of my delivery. The intent of week 4 was not to be anti-patriotic, but to show that God is rarely glorified by disobedience.

Panel member 6, a historian, questioned the breadth of the eight-week class. He encouraged me to reduce content, especially on the two weeks devoted to a history of evangelicals in the political arena. He believed a great deal of this material would be new to the average participant (and he was correct). As a result, I reduced some of the historical content. I also devoted much more time to the PowerPoint slides during weeks 6 and 7 to ensure clarity.

By September 24, I had interviewed all members of the expert panel and received their scores for the evaluation rubric scores. The six-member expert panel determined that 99 percent of the curriculum met or exceeded the sufficient level (see appendix 3). The eight-week curriculum was updated and ready for use in teaching the eight-week class.

### **Teaching the Class**

I taught the eight-week class in the months of October and November during SVC's Sunday school period. An average of 65 adults attended, and at the start of each week, they received the necessary curriculum. All eight weeks utilized PowerPoint, and I pre-recorded each of the weeks. The PowerPoint slides and audio recordings were posted online in the event of participant absence. In addition, participants received a survey before the first class started and after the eighth class concluded.

### **Pre-Class Survey**

On October 7, I introduced the eight-week series to a large class of adult members at SVC. Two adults distributed the pre-class surveys during my introduction (see appendix 1 for survey). After a brief period, the surveys were collected and placed face down in a box. Participants who informed me in advance that they would be absent received a copy of the survey prior to the first class. Absentees returned their survey to me in a sealed envelope, and these were mixed with all other surveys to ensure anonymity. A total of 77 pre-class surveys were completed.

The pre-class survey focused on three areas: attitude, knowledge, and prayer. Participants were scored in each of these areas based upon their answers. I created an attitude score using questions 2, 4, 9, 11, and 12 of part 2 in the survey. These questions indicated a participant's attitude toward political leaders. A knowledge score was created from questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 13-21 of part 2 in the survey. These questions indicated a participant's theology of civil government. I created a prayer score using question 2 of part 1 in the survey. This score measured the amount of time (in minutes) a participant spends in prayer for political leaders.

### **Session 1**

Teaching for the first week focused on Genesis 1-9, "A Theology of Government." Genesis 1:26-27 reveals an authority structure in which God is over man, and man is over the rest of creation. God created man to "take dominion" or to manage the world around him in ways pleasing to God (Gen 1:26). Man, however, refused to do this. Genesis 4 shows the outworking of sin as men begin to force authority over other men, commit murder, and acquire wives. After the flood, God granted man authority over other men for the purpose of restraining sin (Gen 9:6). Moreover, man has been charged to manage God's creation and provide order by restraining evil, which is the purpose of civil government.

### **Session 2**

The second session was titled "Prayer: A Biblical Response to Government." First Timothy 2:1-4 urges believers to pray evangelistically for everyone, specifically for political leaders. The reason for these prayers is so "that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life" (1 Tim 2:2). Thus, Paul connects evangelistic prayer to the possibility of national transformation.

The salvation of the lost should weigh heavily upon believers. Paul was called to minister to "kings" or his civil authorities (Acts 9:15). Though the authorities persecuted

him, Paul never became embittered but continued to pray and minister. First Timothy 2:1-4 is instructive for dealing with a wayward government, and Paul's ministry sets an example for believers to follow.

The final page of week 2 curriculum listed state and federal leaders from central Illinois. I encouraged participants to circle two political leaders and to commit to praying daily for them. Furthermore, I provided instructions and help on how to pray for leaders.

### **Session 3**

“Submission: A Biblical Response to Government” expounded Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Both passages urge believers to submit to their governing authorities. Submission is not a reward given to political leaders when they please God's people; rather, submission is God's will for His people. Since all authorities are established by God, submission to civil authority is a means of submitting to God. In the context of Romans 12, submission should be seen as an act of worship (vv. 1-2). The apostles exhorted believers to submit to civil authority by paying their taxes (Rom 13:7) and honoring the emperor (1 Pet 2:17).

The final page of week 3 curriculum provided contact information for state and federal leaders from central Illinois. I encouraged participants to send a kind note or to make contact on behalf of SVC. The goal of this exercise was to show honor to a political leader by sharing that our church is praying for him or her.

### **Session 4**

The fourth session focused upon “Disobedience: A Christian's Last Resort.” Submission is normative, though God makes one exception. I grounded this class in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 before proceeding to the apostolic example in Acts 5. The apostles' actions show a biblical condition for disobedience, a limit, and a motive. Believers should disobey their authorities when compelled to sin against God. If they must disobey, God does not desire His people escalate their disobedience into rebellion.

Furthermore, the motive for civil disobedience is not personal gain but to identify and to honor Jesus Christ.

The final page of the curriculum for week 4 contained biblical examples of civil disobedience. Participants were encouraged to look up each example in Scripture and explain if it was biblically justified or not.

### **Session 5**

Senator Dale Righter visited to share his testimony during class. The senator discussed the difficulty of being a believer in a spiritually dark atmosphere, ways to pray for him, and how he appreciates encouragement from believers. Participants were given twenty minutes for question-and-answer, and they appreciated the senator's sincerity. I led the class in praying for Senator Righter at the end.

Few participants had ever met a lawmaker, and their impressions seemed to have been formed by media coverage of the Illinois legislature or campaign ads. Meeting a lawmaker in person, one who drove two hours to share his heart at SVC, meant a great deal to participants. For the first time, many saw lawmakers as individuals who genuinely need prayer.

### **Session 6**

The title of the sixth session was "Evangelicals in the Political Arena: Pre-1970s." Prior to the 1970s, evangelicalism was predominantly a revivalist movement concerned with preserving Christian America. During the post-WWI years, evangelicals mobilized politically for the first time. They fought for Prohibition and women's suffrage during these years, while standing against immigration and biological evolution. Leading up to the 1970s, as American morality was sharply declining, evangelicals desired to engage the culture. Whereas Billy Graham had emphasized the gospel, Jerry Falwell began to emphasize political activism. American evangelicals have been deeply

concerned about God and country throughout their history. At different times, the movement failed to distinguish patriotism from Christianity.

The intent of this session was to show participants some of the unbiblical engagement of evangelicals prior to the 1970s. This session also provided context for understanding the formation of the Christian Right. This sixth week naturally led into the week 7, which completed my survey of evangelical history.

### **Session 7**

Session 7 was entitled “Evangelicals in the Political Arena: Post-1970s.” The removal of prayer and Bible reading from public schools, the sexual revolution, the impeachment of President Nixon, and abortion are all problems that alarmed evangelicals. Leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson channeled this alarm into political activism, specifically for the sake of saving America. They were so successful that the evangelical vote became to Republicans in the 1990s what unions had been to Democrats.<sup>1</sup> Evangelicals, however, made unbiblical sacrifices to secure their success. The Christian Right grew in political might at the expense of a distinctly Christian identity. Furthermore, the Right’s political influence did not lead to a cultural change throughout America.<sup>2</sup>

The intent of this session was to show participants some of the unbiblical engagement of evangelicals after the 1970s. Participants were familiar with various details regarding the Christian Right, but few knew how it began, what it did, or what happened. Thus, participants were ready for the final session which proposed five principles for *biblically* engaging the political arena.

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 415.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel K. Williams, *God’s Own Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 245.

## Session 8

“Five Principles for Engaging the Political Arena” was the title of the final session. First, believers must have a biblical concept of government. God established government to manage creation and to provide order by restraining sin. Government should uphold a moral standard, but it cannot save or transform a nation. Thus, one must not place his hope in government.

Second, believers must cultivate a biblical attitude toward their political leaders. If one’s zeal is truly God-centered, then one will “speak evil of no one” (Titus 3:2) while understanding that the enemy is not “flesh and blood” (Eph 6:12).

Third, when God’s people engage in politics, they must have a biblical foundation for their political positions. Positing positions as “Christian” dishonors the Lord because one is speaking with authority where God’s Word says little or nothing. One must see the difference between personal opinions and biblical revelation.

Fourth, believers must not cultivate fellowship between light and darkness (2 Cor 6:14). Christ has united His people to Himself in eternal fellowship. Coalitions that claim the name of Christ while uniting believers and unbelievers greatly dishonors the Lord. No ends can possibly justify this means.

Fifth, the mission that Christ gave is not one of moral reformation but to make disciples of Him (Matt 28:18-20). Whereas political activism focuses upon political changes, disciple-making confronts the root of the problem: sinners alienated from God. Should God use His church to transform America, it will not be through politics but through faithful proclamation and true repentance.

The final class tied weeks 1 through 7 together and brought them to a conclusion. Participants were not encouraged to avoid politics, but to use politics as a means to exalt Jesus Christ.



## **Post-Class Survey**

On November 25, at the close of session 8, the post-class survey was distributed by two adults (see appendix 1 for survey). This survey was identical to the pre-class survey in order to make pre- and post-class comparisons. Participants were asked to place their survey face down in a box as they left the room. Those who notified me in advance that they would be absent still received the survey. They were instructed to listen to the online audio of session 8, complete the survey, and then return it to me in an envelope the following week. A total of 61 post-class surveys were completed, 33 of which were completed by adult members of SVC who attended all eight sessions.

A *t*-test for dependent samples was used to analyze the pre- and post-class surveys in three areas (see appendix 4 for participant scores). The frequency for which adult members of SVC pray for their political leaders increased by almost seven minutes, which was statistically significant ( $t_{(32)} = 3.33, p < .0011$ ). Theological knowledge of civil government showed a statistically significant increase as well ( $t_{(32)} = 4.81, p < .00001$ ). Participant attitude toward political leaders improved throughout the eight-week class. This improvement, too, was statistically significant ( $t_{(32)} = 3.96, p < .0002$ ).

## **Summary**

This ministry project involved two elements. The first element was to develop an eight-week curriculum for evaluation by an expert panel. Utilizing a rubric, the panel determined the curriculum was 99 percent sufficient (see appendix 3). Curriculum development required three months to complete.

The project's second element utilized the curriculum as part of teaching an eight-week class at SVC. Pre- and post-class surveys were used to measure three areas: frequency of prayer for political leaders, theological knowledge of civil government, and attitudes toward political leaders (see appendix 1). A statistically significant difference was determined by *t*-test analyses in each of these three areas. An overall score was

created for each participant using these three areas. The impact of the overall project among all participants was statistically significant ( $t_{(32)} = 5.25, p < .000005$ ).

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter evaluates the project's purpose, goals, and methodology. Project strengths and weaknesses are addressed, followed by personal and theological reflections.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to teach a theology of civil government to select adult members at Southern View Chapel in Springfield, Illinois. Civil government is the institution God ordained to manage creation and provide order by restraining evil. Government is necessary in a fallen world, though this truth is often difficult to admit or even see.

While I have ministered through Civil Servant Ministries, I have found that disparaging comments toward political leaders are common. I have long desired to help believers grasp why God ordained government, what it exists to do, and how Christians should or should not respond. Moreover, I have wanted to develop a theology of civil government and teach it at my church.

Throughout the course of this project, I outlined and began to develop an eight-week class to teach at SVC. The class was supplemented with PowerPoint slides and a detailed curriculum (see appendix 5). As a result of this project, participants prayed more frequently for political leaders, their theological knowledge of government increased, and their attitudes toward political leaders improved. Thus, the purpose of this project was fulfilled.

## **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

This project had four goals: (1) develop an eight-week curriculum; (2) increase theological knowledge of civil government; (3) improve attitudes toward political leaders; and (4) pray for political leaders.

### **Goal 1**

The first goal of this project was to develop an eight-week curriculum to supplement the class. I designed the curriculum to include fill-in-the-blanks to be completed during each lecture with several questions to encourage post-class thought. Homework assignments were provided during some of the weeks, one emphasized the need to regularly pray for the salvation of political leaders.

An expert panel comprised of six people of diverse backgrounds evaluated the curriculum according to a rubric (see appendix 2). They also provided suggestions during an interview. When the evaluation scores were compiled, 99 percent of the criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level (see appendix 3). Thus, this goal was achieved.

### **Goal 2**

The project's second goal was to increase knowledge of a theology of civil government among select adult members of SVC. Of the 22 survey questions, 15 were used to create a theological knowledge of government score (see appendix 4 for participant scores). This score utilized questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 13-21 of part 2 in the survey. Question number 17, however, was discarded due to poor wording that caused confusion (to be discussed in evaluation of project methodology).

The 15 theological knowledge questions utilized a six-point Likert scale. The maximum knowledge score was 90 points. I wanted to see a positive change between pre and post-class surveys for questions 1, 5, 6, 8, 10, 13, and 21. A negative change was desirable for questions 3 and 14-20. Thus, questions 3 and 14-20 were reverse scored such that "strongly disagree" merited 6 points instead of 1. The average pre- and post-class knowledge scores for all 33 participants are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Theological knowledge: Average pre- and post-class scores

Pre-Class	Post-Class	Change
57.42	64.36	+6.94

A *t*-test for dependent samples was administered to determine if the pre- and post-class change in knowledge scores was statistically significant. The *t*-test determined that a score increase of 6.94 was statistically significant ( $t_{(32)} = 4.81, p < .00001$ ).

The *t*-test result suggests the eight-week class made a discernable impact on participant understanding of civil government. Feedback from the class aligns with this result. For instance, a recurring comment was, “You’ve given me a different understanding of government.” Some had not considered that their desire for small government was not always biblical—a government too small cannot restrain evil. Others had thought that America could be changed if enough evangelicals would arise and vote. They had not heard that God did not create government to change society. Governments do not change the people, but historically, people do change their government.

Participant understanding of civil government grew more biblical as the eight-week class progressed. Given the *t*-test analysis and class feedback, the second goal of this project was accomplished.

### **Goal 3**

The project’s third goal was to change the attitude of select SVC adult members toward their political leaders. Of the 22 questions on the survey, 5 were used to create an attitude score (see appendix 4 for participant scores). This score utilized questions 2, 4, 9, 11, and 12 in the survey.

The 5 questions utilized a six-point Likert scale. The maximum attitude score was 30 points. A positive change in pre- and post-class surveys was desirable for questions 2, 11, and 12. I looked for a negative change for questions 4 and 9. Thus, questions 4 and

9 were reverse scored such that a “strongly disagree” merited 6 points instead of 1. The average pre- and post-class attitude scores are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Attitude toward leaders: Average pre and post-class scores

Pre-Class	Post-Class	Change
20.03	22.12	+2.09

A *t*-test for dependent samples was administered to determine if the pre- and post-class change in attitude scores was statistically significant. The *t*-test determined that a score increase of 2.09 was statistically significant ( $t_{(32)} = 3.96, p < .0002$ ).

The result from the *t*-test suggests that participant attitude toward political leaders did improve as a result of the eight-week class. While few participants reached out to their political leaders, many shared that the way they viewed their leaders had changed. I incorporated personal stories at times to help participants see that politicians are real people. Senator Righter’s visit during week 5 also helped to change attitudes.

The senator shared his testimony of salvation, how God had used the ministry of CSM in his life, and then allowed participants to ask him anything. Questions varied widely. One participant asked how he could pray for Senator Righter, while most others asked about Illinois politics. The senator’s sincerity made a significant impact.

Participant attitudes toward political leaders improved due to the eight-week class. Given the *t*-test analysis and class feedback, the third goal of this project was accomplished.

#### **Goal 4**

The final goal of this project was to increase the frequency with which select adult members of SVC pray for their political leaders. Section 1 of the pre- and post-class survey asked participants to state the amount of time in minutes they spend each week

praying for their political leaders (see appendix 4 for participant responses). The average pre- and post-class time in prayer is shown in table 3.

Table 3. Praying for leaders: Average pre- and post-class time (mins)

Pre-Class	Post-Class	Change
11.48	18.30	+6.82

A t-test for dependent samples was administered to determine if the pre- and post-class change in prayer time was statistically significant. The *t*-test determined that an increase of 6 minutes 49 seconds was statistically significant ( $t_{(32)} = 3.33, p < .0011$ ).

The *t*-test result suggests that participants prayed more faithfully for political leaders as a result of the eight-week class. Participants commented on prayer in a general or theological sense, but I do not recall comments that were more personal. Many shared that this class changed their view of political leaders, but no one said that this class caused them to pray more. The lack of feedback likely indicates an uncomfortableness. It almost seems boastful to share how much one prays.

I would have liked feedback confirming that participants prayed for political leaders more than they did prior to the eight-week class. However, minimal feedback does not invalidate the *t*-test result. Therefore, the project’s fourth goal was achieved.

### **Evaluation of Project Methodology**

The methodology of this project involved curriculum, an expert panel, pre- and post-class surveys, and teaching. Each of these elements will be discussed.

### **Class Curriculum**

I developed the curriculum from an outline created for each of the eight sessions (see appendix 5 for outline and curriculum). God’s design for government provided a starting point for the entire class (Gen 1-9). Thereafter, I wanted participants to see how they should respond to their authorities (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17) and how evangelicals

have historically responded. My outline ended on a constructive note by offering five principles for engaging the political arena.

The curriculum condensed the teaching for each week into a summary with sufficient whitespace. Illustrations were interspersed throughout with a reasonable amount of detail in the notes. Fill-in-the-blanks and thought-provoking questions encouraged participants to engage with the teaching. I wanted participants to do more than gain knowledge during the eight-week class. For this reason, curriculum for weeks 2 and 3 encouraged participants to pray and to honor their leaders. Contact information was provided for local lawmakers with instructions on how to pray for leaders or how to send an encouraging card.

I handed out 60-75 copies of the curriculum each week. It was common for participants to fill in the curriculum blanks as I taught or to ask for the previous week's curriculum afterwards. The use of curriculum supplemented the lectures and PowerPoint slides, and this tool enhanced participant engagement with the material.

### **The Expert Panel**

The diversity of the six-member expert panel meant that each person provided unique insights. The lawmaker on the panel said to “be a little more thought provoking or challenging” in the curriculum questions. The member who is a lobbyist provided some examples of civil disobedience, such as the times that protesters shut down the freeways in Chicago—is this biblical? The historian on the panel focused his critique upon the curriculum's outline of evangelical history. I was encouraged by the diverse discussion of the panel, and the curriculum improved as a result of their critiques.

The rubric provided a structure for panel members as they critiqued the curriculum. All thoughts and critiques were valuable, but I especially wanted members to score the curriculum in four areas: biblical faithfulness, curriculum content, teaching methodology, and practicality (see appendix 3 for rubric). The rubric allowed me to determine a consensus in these four areas. I was encouraged that each member devoted at



least two hours, if not many more hours, to providing thoughtful feedback. The expert panel determined that the curriculum was 99 percent sufficient.

A concern with the panel was that members may have been too gracious with the rubric scores. Each of the six members on the panel had seven areas to score. This means that 42 scores determined the overall sufficiency of the curriculum. Yet, out of 42 scores, only one score was below a “3” (see appendix 4 for rubric scores).

The expert panel provided valuable feedback, and the rubric helped guide the panel as they critiqued the curriculum. Rubric scores may have been slightly less gracious had I not known each panel member personally. Nonetheless, the panel and the rubric were effective tools for achieving goal 1 of this project.

### **The Eight-Week Class**

I taught each class in the main auditorium at SVC to encourage a larger audience to attend. On average, 65 people attended the eight-week class, which for a Sunday school class at SVC, was quite large.

Most of the eight class sessions started with a brief discussion of two questions from the pre-class survey (see appendix 1). Participants were curious to know the “right” answer, so I presented the class average to a given question. For instance, question 18 stated, “The markets should be free to regulate themselves.” The average pre-class score was 4.27, which signals agreement. Week 1 helped the class see the necessity of government in a fallen world, and I briefly mentioned question 18 at the start of week 2. I asked the class to consider buying a home or investing in a stock without *any* legal protections. One participant who owns a business said he had never considered this. He suddenly realized the need for some market regulation. The post-class average for question 18 decreased to 3.59 as a result.

The main teaching for each week utilized PowerPoint slides and followed the curriculum. Participants filled in the blanks on their curriculum as I taught, and they asked

for help as necessary. Each session lasted forty minutes, and afterwards, at least three participants stayed to ask further questions.

The amount of material covered made it difficult to allow in-class discussion. The nature of the class material also made this difficult. For instance, no one at any point in the class, before or after, asked a simple question. One participant asked if it was necessary to vote, and another wanted to discuss when a larger government might be necessary. Either of these questions could have led to other participant questions and may have required the entire forty-minute period to respond. Thus, I taught the planned material for each week and then stayed for after-class discussion.

In-class discussion did take place during week 5 when Senator Righter visited. He shared his testimony, his struggles as a believer in politics, and allowed participants to ask him questions. Participants had no shortage of questions, and for most, this was their first interaction with a political leader. They wanted to know his perspective on Illinois politics, his thoughts on whether calling a lawmaker makes any difference, and they asked how to pray for him. Senator Righter's presence gave life to my statement that political leaders are real people with real struggles. The increase in prayer seen between the pre- and post-class surveys may have largely been a result of the senator's visit.

In weeks 6 and 7, I overviewed the history of American evangelicals in the political arena. Few participants had ever heard this material. One shared, "I grew up knowing some of this, but you helped me connect the dots." Many had heard of Billy Sunday or Jerry Falwell, for instance, but their names were like dots randomly scattered in history. I wanted participants to see the historical context surrounding key evangelical leaders and events. The Christian Right did not happen in a vacuum; rather, it was largely a product of anger and fear—anger that Christian America was no more and fear of what America would become for future generations.

A potential danger during weeks 6 and 7 was the tendency to become polarizing. Specifically, if the Christian Right was wrong, should believers dismiss everything the

Christian Right ever did? As one participant asked, “Should Christians even vote?” Weeks 6 and 7 left some wondering about what Christians should do. They had to wait until week 8 when I introduced five principles for engaging the political arena.

The eight-week class ended with many encouragements. Most encouraging to me was a participant who regularly listens to conservative talk radio. She thanked me and said that “this class presented a whole different way of engaging government.”

### **Pre- and Post-Class Surveys**

The pre- and post-class surveys allowed me to measure participants in three areas: theological understanding of civil government, attitudes toward political leaders, and time spent in prayer for political leaders. To have paired samples of data, I used the same survey before and after the eight-week class (see appendix 1 for survey).

The survey had two sections. Section 1 ensured that participants were adult members of SVC, and asked participants to state the amount of time they spend praying for political leaders. Section 2 had 22 questions that utilized a six-point Likert scale. Attitude and theological knowledge scores were computed from this section.

I discovered that survey question 17 confused many participants. The question read as follows, “When a government becomes oppressive, the people may rebel.” This question was not meant to be an observation on cause and effect, to gauge if participants believed civil rebellion could be justified. Due to confusion, this question was discarded from the calculations. A maximum score of 30 was possible for participant attitude. For theological knowledge, a maximum score of 90 was possible.

The average scores in participant knowledge, attitudes, and time in prayer increased. Based upon my interaction with participants, the increase in these areas was not surprising. The survey proved to be an effective instrument for this project.

## **Strengths of the Project**

The first strength of this project was the use of curriculum. I carefully selected six people of diverse backgrounds who read the curriculum to ensure it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practical (see appendix 2 for rubric). Their feedback improved the curriculum and it helped me see how SVC members would receive my teaching.

In addition, writing curriculum better prepared me for teaching the eight-week class. Had I written eight lectures based upon this project, I would have focused on summarizing chapters 2 and 3. The resulting classes may have been too academic. In contrast, curriculum writing forced me to develop the classes with my audience in mind.

The eight-week class was academic, but feedback suggested I had connected with my audience. At least five participants said, “You helped me think very differently about the political arena.” Improvement of participant attitudes toward political leaders and the increase in prayer affirm I had connected. Much of the effectiveness of the eight-week class was due to developing curriculum.

The second strength of this project was that participants were challenged to think biblically about government. I discussed topics few of the participants, if any, had ever considered. For instance, what is government and why does it exist? Much of the knowledge that SVC members have of government comes from conservative talk radio and online news. Thus, members discuss complex political issues without any solid foundation upon which to reason. Biblically, government is the institution God ordained to manage creation and provide order by restraining evil. I wanted class participants to take hold of this foundation.

If participants would accept that God ordained government to manage creation, then government is tasked by God to oversee the environment—not all regulations are overreaches or wasteful. If participants would believe that God invested government with the authority to restrain sin, then government must be large enough to accomplish this task. A small government is not always best. Feedback from participants employed by state

government was encouraging at times. Some realized that the work they do on behalf of the state is not a waste. Managing the state's natural resources, for instance, is actually one of God's purposes for government.

The project's third strength was its focus on engaging the political arena. Weeks 6 and 7 offered a history of evangelicals in the political arena for the past 200 years. Thus, participants knew I would not champion the Christian Right in week 8. This does not mean they understood what to do. If the Christian Right is wrong, should believers avoid politics? No. Some believers want to take action in the political arena, and this desire is not unbiblical. Week 8 provided a constructive alternative to the Christian Right with five principles for engaging the political arena.

Feedback from the principles was positive. In fact, no one said they disagreed. Participants said they disagreed with Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, but they believed they needed to do something. The final week of the class helped redirect the focus of some participants from being America-centric. They saw that they could engage the political arena with the hope of making disciples.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The lack of in-class discussion may have been the most significant weakness of this project. Each session involved limited discussion of two pre-class survey questions followed by the main lesson. Some participants stayed afterwards to ask a question or to share thoughts. Most, however, did not. Lack of in-class interaction hindered my ability to gauge how the material was being received. It also prevented me from being aware of any issues.

An issue that arose pertained to the homework for week 3. Contact information was provided to reach out to a local lawmaker, and I shared instructions to help. Yet, three weeks later a leader at SVC asked, "How is it appropriate to send an encouraging card to an ungodly lawmaker?" I had previously answered this question, but it seemed more time was necessary for participants to understand. At least two participants did write a note of

encouragement to a lawmaker. One participant wrote several encouraging cards and then delivered these in person. Most, however, seemed to question the wisdom of reaching out in a positive way.

To better deal with time constraints, the number of class sessions should have been increased. Teaching ten sessions, as opposed to eight, would have allowed 10-15 minutes for weekly in-class discussion. Few questions could have been fully answered during this time, but it would have helped.

The second weakness of the project was that a large number did not complete the eight-week class. I regularly reminded participants to listen to the online audio when absent. PowerPoint slides displayed the website at the start of each class, and I used a laser pointer to draw further attention to the website. Yet, out of 61 post-class surveys collected, only 33 met the necessary criteria for this project (an adult member of SVC who attended all eight classes). I expected participants would miss some weeks, but I was disappointed that so many did not listen to the audio when absent.

I do not believe the survey was ineffective or that a different instrument could have provided more data. Data gathering, in general, was foreign to members of SVC. Few participants seemed to understand the significance of the surveys. If I were to teach the eight-week class again, I would better prepare participants by using a sign-up sheet in advance. This would allow me to speak with each person that wanted to participate before week 1 of the class.

The lack of in-class discussion and low number of participants who completed all eight weeks were two project weaknesses. Nonetheless, the *t*-test analyses aligned with class feedback. This alignment suggests that the project achieved its goals.

### **Theological Reflections**

George Marsden asserts that much of the focus of American evangelicals has

been to “restore America to her original Christian heritage.”<sup>1</sup> Prior to the twentieth century, evangelicals sought to preserve the nation’s Christian heritage. As this heritage slipped away, they set their sight upon restoring it. The focus of American evangelicals has been thoroughly America-centric. Thus, it is not surprising that the slogan “Make America Great” would appeal to 81 percent of evangelical voters in the recent presidential election.

The issue is not that evangelicals care about their country; rather, the issue is idolatry. The love of God and His glory should be an ever-growing desire in a believer’s life. This love must be supreme, so all-encompassing that it determines how and why believers love other people and earthly things (Luke 14:26; 1 Cor 10:31). Thus, a greater love should define a believer’s lesser loves. Many evangelical fights to preserve or to reclaim America have allowed a lesser love to eclipse the greater. For this reason, they have been guilty of idolatry.

God has revealed that the mission of His church is not a mission of political or moral change. The church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20). Believers should care about issues pertaining to sin and righteousness, and they should make their voices heard even in the political arena. The goal, however, is not America-centric but kingdom oriented. The church must cry out against sin, but why? Ultimately, so unbelievers might repent, be saved, and join in joyful worship of God forever.

The love of God should propel the mission of evangelicals. When this love is central, God’s people can trust in His sovereignty. They will not be afraid to live in a secular nation or afraid of the future. They will not be filled with anger that their nation is changing or angry that countless political battles have been lost. By loving God above country, God’s people can better focus upon making disciples throughout the country.

This project has often reminded me that if America is ever to change, it will only be as a result of God mercifully reaching down to draw millions to Himself. God did not

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<sup>1</sup> George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and Culture*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 246.

ordain government to make sinners act like saints. Government must stand against sin as a dam against raging waters, but it has no power to calm the rage. Only Christ can do this when He imparts new life into the sinner's heart. For the love of God and His glory in America, may the church not forsake the gospel but go and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Personal Reflections**

The process of completing this doctoral project produced much fruit in my life and ministry. First, this project encouraged me to humbly understand opposing views. This lesson was impressed upon me quite ironically while studying William Jennings Bryan.

Bryan carried immense ethos as a former presidential candidate and a national celebrity. Fundamentalists came to trust him as a defender of the faith, their spokesman, and leader in the battle against evolution. Bryan appeared to his audiences as a Christian who had mastered evolutionary theory, one who could easily refute it with Scripture. Yet, the Scopes Trial painfully revealed Bryan's ignorance of geology, philology, ancient civilizations, and even the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

Had fundamentalists walked humbly, they never would have sensationalized the Scopes Trial, mocked their opponents, or conveyed a superiority; rather, they would have attempted to understand evolutionary theory, represent their opponents accurately, and compassionately engage unbelievers with God's Word.

A second benefit was that this project helped me pursue balance. As I researched the ways evangelicals responded to nineteenth-century social problems, I read about the ministries of Charles Finney and D. L. Moody. Both men were revivalist preachers, but admittedly, I was biased toward Moody and against Finney.

Charles Finney was a consistent Arminian. Though I deplore Finney's methods of evangelism and parts of his theology, I discovered something commendable: Finney was

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<sup>2</sup> See Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 136-37.



an outspoken abolitionist in the North and in the South. Conversely, though I am partial to the ministry of D. L. Moody and more comfortable with his theology, Moody's revival meetings were racially segregated. Pursuing balance has allowed me to see that Finney understood an implication of the gospel that Moody did not (Gal 3:28).

Finally, this project opened my eyes to the use of surveys. I attempted to write an honest pre- and post-class survey and provide an honest interpretation of survey results. Analysis of survey results suggested I had achieved statistical significance in three areas, but how could I know I had achieved something significant? The answer lay in assessing class feedback.

Feedback provided snapshots of data from various participants and the surveys provided data from all participants. My survey analyses aligned with the feedback I received throughout the eight-week class. Thus, I was confident I had written a valuable survey and had not misinterpreted its results.

### **Conclusion**

This project achieved all four of its stated goals. Working with an expert panel, I developed an eight-week curriculum that met the sufficiency score for goal 1. Feedback from participants combined with *t*-test analyses indicated that class participants grew in their knowledge of civil government, developed more biblical attitudes toward political leaders, and spent more time praying for their leaders. Analyses also indicated that the project made a statistically significant change in each of these areas. Thus, goals 2-4 were achieved.

The project could have been improved by allowing more time for in-class discussion. Increasing the number of classes from 8 to 10 would have helped. A second weakness was low class completion. Out of 77 pre-class surveys collected, only 33 post-class surveys could be used for this project. A sign-up sheet administered prior to the first class would have allowed me to speak with each participant and answer questions about the importance of the pre- and post-class surveys.

The expert panel and the use of curriculum made a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the eight-week class. Participants were encouraged to think biblically each week, and they were given principles to help them engage the political arena without setting the gospel aside.

Moreover, this research project encouraged me to think in greater depth about the mission of the church. I was also challenged to humbly understand opposing views and to exercise balance in my research. As an added benefit, I have learned much about using surveys in a ministry context. This project has been a valuable experience.

## APPENDIX 1

### PRE AND POST-CLASS SURVEY

The following instrument was a survey designed for select SVC adult members. Some general questions are followed by a twenty-one-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess the present level of theological understanding of civil government among participants, attitudes toward civil government, and prayer for political leaders.

CLASS SURVEY:  
A BIBLICAL SURVEY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Southern View Chapel is committed to “Learning Truth, Living Truth.” One of the truths of Scripture we desire to live out is Christ’s command to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20). As a result, we have a ministry within our church that reaches the political arena for Christ.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to gauge how well select SVC adult members understand God’s design of civil government, demonstrate Christ-like attitudes towards political leaders, and faithfully pray for them. This research is being conducted by Shaun Lewis as part of his doctoral research project. In this research, you will answer questions and indicate your level of agreement with various statements. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Month and Day of Birth (## - ##):** \_\_\_\_\_

**First Initial of Middle Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 1**

*Please answer each question*

1. Are you a member of Southern View Chapel? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. On average, how much time weekly do you spend in prayer for political leaders?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How many class sessions did you attend (or listen to the audio)? \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6  
 Strongly Disagree Somewhat Somewhat Agree Strongly  
 Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

1.	Christians should be active in politics.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	I regularly pray for Republicans as well as Democrats.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	We should honor our authorities to the degree that they act honorably.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	I regularly complain about politics.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Government should submit to the authority of the Bible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	I regularly pray for our political leaders to be saved.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Churches should work together on political issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	There are times when government should be large.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	I believe government generally interferes with life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	One function of government is to manage our natural resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	I am saddened when I learn about the moral failures of any political leader.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12.	I am generally thankful for the work of my political leaders.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13.	The church should influence the state.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	I believe political rallies are helpful.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are rights that God gives to all men.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	Governments should not legislate morality.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.	When a government becomes oppressive, the people may rebel.	1	2	3	4	5	6

18.	The markets should be free to regulate themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19.	I believe that if we as a nation would humble ourselves and pray, God would continue to bless us.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.	If every evangelical voted, we could halt the moral decline of our country.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.	I believe an official needs to be moral to be qualified for public office.	1	2	3	4	5	6

## APPENDIX 2

### EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel of six people: one pastor outside of SVC, one who ministers vocationally in the political arena, one lawmaker who is a mature Christian, one lobbyist who is a mature Christian, one longtime member of SVC, and an historian. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it is biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practical.

Name of evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Theology of Civil Government Curriculum Evaluation</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
The curriculum is theologically sound.					
Biblical principles in the curriculum are well supported with Scripture.					
<b>Content</b>					
The curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum is clear and easy to understand.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, and homework.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum encourages biblical attitudes towards political leaders.					
The curriculum encourages believers to pray for their political leaders.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:



APPENDIX 3

EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM SCORES

Table A1. Evaluation of Curriculum Scores

	Evaluator						Total %
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>							
The curriculum is theologically sound.	3	3	4	3	4	4	100%
Biblical principles in the curriculum are well supported with Scripture.	3	4	4	3	3	3	100%
<b>Content</b>							
The curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.	2	4	3	3	4	4	94%
The curriculum is clear and easy to understand.	3	4	4	3	3	4	100%
<b>Methodology</b>							
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, and homework.	3	3	4	3	3	4	100%
<b>Practicality</b>							
The curriculum encourages biblical attitudes towards political leaders.	3	4	4	4	4	4	100%
The curriculum encourages believers to pray for their political leaders.	4	4	4	4	4	4	100%
<b>Curriculum Sufficiency = 99%</b>							

1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary

APPENDIX 4

PRE- AND POST-CLASS PARTICIPANT SCORES

Table A2. Pre- and post-class participant scores

Participant	Time in Prayer (mins)		Theological Knowledge		Attitude	
	Pre-Class	Post-Class	Pre-Class	Post-Class	Pre-Class	Post-Class
1	10	10	59	58	17	18
2	0	0	54	65	15	16
3	5	5	49	50	21	22
4	10	20	53	67	21	25
5	0	5	61	82	16	23
6	20	30	63	62	24	22
7	5	15	61	85	25	30
8	5	5	50	58	16	19
9	0	15	48	52	21	23
10	5	15	62	58	18	25
11	0	0	58	48	18	22
12	10	10	61	68	22	22
13	60	90	54	63	21	22
14	20	10	56	68	18	21
15	10	10	58	62	23	22
16	5	5	58	76	18	20
17	0	20	58	53	17	26
18	0	20	67	78	21	22
19	20	20	33	53	25	26
20	5	15	61	71	21	21
21	0	0	54	62	19	14
22	45	35	56	72	23	25
23	90	90	57	61	22	24
24	0	40	55	71	20	20
25	1	15	56	58	18	21
26	30	30	54	62	16	20
27	0	0	65	62	19	23
28	0	30	67	66	25	22
29	2	4	57	56	17	20
30	0	10	71	84	20	28
31	1	0	52	61	18	18
32	20	10	70	67	21	24
33	0	20	57	65	25	24
Average	11.48	18.30	57.42	64.36	20.03	22.12
	+6.82		+6.94		+2.09	

## APPENDIX 5

### EIGHT-WEEK CLASS CURRICULUM

The following curriculum was evaluated by the expert panel to ensure that it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practical. Answer for the curriculum blanks have been provided.

Week 1 focused upon the biblical foundation for government, while weeks 2-4 looked at the believer's response. Senator Dale Righter shared his testimony with the class during week 5. Weeks 6-7 overviewed the history of evangelicals in the political arena, and week 8 concluded with five principles for engaging the political arena.

## “BEYOND THE BALLOT”

An Eight-Week Curriculum taught by Shaun D. Lewis

I have been blessed with the opportunity to teach God’s Word to our political leaders in Illinois. Throughout the last 11 years I have often thought what God’s Word says about politics and government. Why does government exist? What did God ordain government to do? How should I respond? Is the Christian Right actually wrong?

This class is the culmination of my ministry with CSM, and I am deeply grateful for your interest. Each week you will receive curriculum to supplement the teaching. Please fill in the blanks during class, and I hope the questions stimulate further thought.

Since this class is a requirement for my doctoral studies, you will receive a survey at the beginning and end of these eight weeks. The surveys are anonymous and entirely voluntary. Your participation allows faculty at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to evaluate the effectiveness of this class. If you miss a week, it is important that you catch up. I have posted each class online with resources at: [www.civilmin.org/class](http://www.civilmin.org/class).

My prayer is that these classes will: (1) give you a more biblical grasp of government, (2) encourage you to submit to your secular authorities, and (3) move you to pray more fervently for political leaders.

Thank you for participating! I hope these next eight weeks will be a rich blessing in your life!

### CLASS OVERVIEW

Week 1	October 7, 2018	Biblical Foundations for Government
Week 2	October 14, 2018	A Biblical Response to Government: Prayer
Week 3	October 21, 2018	A Biblical Response to Government: Submission
Week 4	October 28, 2018	The Christian and Civil Disobedience
Week 5	November 4, 2018	Evangelical Responses Pre-1970s
Week 6	November 11, 2018	Evangelical Responses Post 1970s
Week 7	November 18, 2018	A Testimony: Senator Dale Righter
Week 8	November 25, 2018	Engaging Government: Five Biblical Principles

## WEEK 1

### *Biblical Foundations for Government*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Government is everywhere. Consider your home for a minute. Every aspect of it was influenced by standards established by government.

Zoning regulations determined where your home could be built.

Permits allowed the builders to break ground.

Codes states determined how your home could be built.

Contract requirements oversaw the buying and selling of your home.

Tax credits may have helped you purchase your home.

Virtually every aspect of your life is influenced by government. The Federal Communications Commission sets regulations for radio, cable and satellite television, and your cell phone. The Department of Agriculture regulates most things you eat, the Food and Drug Administration inspects how food is packaged, and the Environmental Protection Agency works to ensure you have a clean water supply.

Government is involved in so many aspects of life, and what one person considers necessary another considers waste.

QUESTION: What do you believe is the purpose of civil government?

QUESTION: Many people believe our government does too much, meddles, or has grown too large. Do you generally agree? If so, why?

## I. Government: From Creation to the Fall (Genesis 1-3)

What is the proper role of government? We need to go back to the beginning in order to understand God's authority and the authority He gave to man. Genesis introduces a simple government in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve did not have a Constitution or a Capitol, but the first government did have a king and a structure of authority.

First, we see God's authority. God not only tells things what to do, He tells them what to be and they are (Gen 1). God commands things to exist. He creates, and He reigns as king over every created thing (Psa 93).

The sixth day of creation brings us to mankind. God did not create another beast or a special kind of animal, but the image of Himself.

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“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

— *Genesis 1:26-27*

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**QUESTION:** Genesis 1:26-27 refers to God, mankind, fish, birds, livestock, insects, and the earth. What is the structure of authority between these? A diagram may help.

God created men and women as the physical representation of His authority over the earth. As a result of being God's image, they had the ability to “take dominion” of creation. Adam would lead, and Eve would complement that the two would bring more glory to God on the earth together than apart.

Wrapped up in the concept of government is the meaning of “take dominion.” The meaning is to manage, to rule, or to govern. As a result of being God's image, men and women have an ability that the animals do not. We can govern, and we have never ceased to govern creation since the very beginning.

Perfect harmony and order existed in Eden. God the King established Adam and Eve to represent Him. With the exception of one law, all was at the discretion of mankind to manage and to enjoy.

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“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

— *Genesis 2:16-17*

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Man disobeyed God by violating the only law in all the earth. Some of the changes to notice...

- Animals would no longer submit but would fear man (Gen 9:2)
- Wives would no longer want to submit to their husbands (Gen. 3:16).
- The ground would no longer submit to man’s effort (Gen 3:18).

**QUESTION:** The land, the sea, and the animals have always needed oversight, but how would man as a sinner try to govern creation? How would creation respond?

A principle that the first chapters of Genesis teach is that all authority comes from God. Man was given the right to benevolently rule creation, to manage it in God’s stead. Yet, after the fall, man no longer desired to govern in ways pleasing to God, nor was it enough to govern creation. Starting with Cain, men began to take matters into their own hands and rule over one another.

## **II. Government: From the Fall to the Flood (Genesis 4-9)**

Genesis 4 records advances in music, metallurgy, and animal husbandry. Man progresses in areas of technology and art, and yet, his descent is overwhelming. No progress is made to restrain the wickedness of the sinner’s heart.

Cain committed the world's first murder and then named a city after himself (Gen 4:8, 17). Scholars have noted that naming implies authority or rulership. In other words, Cain killed and declared himself ruler over a people.

*People do not create authority. Only God can do that.*

— Abraham Kuyper

Worse than Cain was his descendant, Lamech. Lamech exulted in murder, took for himself a second wife, and taunted God's vengeance (Gen. 4:23-24). According to Derek Kidner, Lamech marks the beginning of brute force as a means of achieving power over others.

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“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

— *Genesis 6:5*

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**QUESTION:** Were the actions of Cain and Lamech isolated events or characteristic of humanity everywhere? What institution had failed to deal with these crimes?

The Lord intervened to punish Cain and then to flood the earth, but between these events He left man to his own devices. Government structures of some kind existed as cities developed and men ruled over other men. Might made right as man, the image of God, refused to manage the earth in righteous ways. Thus, the world plunged into violence (Gen 6:11), and the Lord responded with judgment (Gen 6:7).

Genesis 9 brings us to a new beginning. Much would remain the same, but the most significant shift is that God now gave man authority over other men.

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“And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”

— *Genesis 9:5-6*

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## THE AUTHORITY OF GOVERNMENT

### Prior to the Flood

Authority to govern the land, the sea, and the animals in ways pleasing to God.

### After the Flood

Authority to govern the land, the sea, and the animals in ways pleasing to God.

Authority to govern men and women  
in order to restrain sin.

Genesis 9:6 assumes an authority structure, and in this verse, God gives this structure the authority to restrain sin. Men ruling other men to hold back violence is a far cry from the glory and beauty of Genesis 1.

**QUESTION:** Consider the Illinois Department of Natural Resources or the Environmental Protection Agency: How are these legitimate exercises of the authority God has given to government? How might these examples abuse their authority?

*A capitalist society requires certain preconditions. Among other things, it must establish a rule of law through enforceable contracts; respect private property; create a trustworthy bureaucracy to arbitrate legal disputes; and offer patents and other protections to promote invention.*

— Ron Chernow

### KEY PRINCIPLES

- God ordained government to manage creation and to provide order by restraining evil. Without anything to restrain sin, wickedness would engulf the world (as in Noah's time).
- Government has authority to act within its God-given sphere, and it is also accountable to God for how it acts. God is the source of all authority.
- God, in His goodness, has established government. Government is not a necessary evil but a precondition for prosperity and peace in a fallen world. No government is perfect, but even the worst is a step above the chaos of anarchy.

## WEEK 2

### *For Kings and All Who Are In High Positions*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

First Timothy helps us understand the church. Paul wrote to instruct and to encourage his young protégé, Timothy, about pastoral ministry. Topics such as church leadership or the need to discern false teaching seem appropriate. Yet, Paul’s strongest command pertains to prayer.

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“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

— *1 Timothy 2:1-4*

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A letter to a young pastor about leading the local church commands prayer “for kings and all who are in high positions.” Paul exhorted Timothy to pray for their political leaders. Pray for Proconsuls and Governors, pray for local leaders in Ephesus, pray for the Senators in Rome, pray even for Caesar.

**QUESTION:** According to 1 Timothy 2:1-4, what kind of lives may we lead by praying for our leaders?

**QUESTION:** Paul “urged” Timothy “first of all” to pray, and Christians have prayed for their political leaders throughout history. What are some of the requests that you have asked of God when you pray for your leaders?

*When it is remembered that the Roman emperor when Paul wrote this Epistle was the cruel monster Nero—who later put Paul and Peter to death—it will be realized that we should pray for our present rulers, no matter how unreasonable they may seem to be.*

— Ralph Earl

Churches and organizations cite 1 Timothy 2:1-4 as a biblical text that encourages prayer for political leaders. Paul’s concern, however, was not that the emperor have wisdom or the strength to govern well, but that he turn to Christ. Paul’s command to Timothy (and to us) centered upon the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

The God “who desires all people to be saved” desires that we pray for “all people” to be saved.

### **I. Paul’s Prayer**

Scripture urges us to pray in at least four ways for unbelievers, specifically for “kings and all who are in high positions.”

*Supplications.* Entreaties or requests made to God for a specific need.

*Prayers.* A general all-encompassing word for prayer.

*Intercessions.* Pleadings to God on behalf of another.

*Thanksgivings.* Expressions of appreciation or gratitude to God.

The sum of these words indicates we must be a people who pray hard for unbelievers. Yet, how can we entreat God on their behalf if we don’t know much about them? How can we plead for another’s salvation if their soul means so little to us?

Paul’s heart for political leaders was more concerned about their eternal destiny than his own present difficulties.

**QUESTION:** We are urged that “thanksgivings be made for all people.” How do you thank God for appointing an ungodly leader? For what can you be thankful?

Roman society mocked Christians for exclusively worshipping a crucified man as God. To identify with Jesus Christ and preach the gospel was a scandal to the Romans (1 Cor 1:18). Their mocking, however, turned to persecution when Nero blamed Christians for burning Rome. Churches burned in response, and families were destroyed as the emperor provoked the world to persecute the Christians.

Paul wanted to “lead a peaceful and quiet life” as a Christian. How did he believe this would happen? By prayer.

QUESTION: Scripture urges us to pray evangelistically. Is praying for the salvation of others an emphasis in your life? If not, what steps could you take to begin to change?

## **II. Paul’s Passion for the Lost**

Paul had proclaimed Christ for thirty years prior to writing his letters to Timothy. It isn’t surprising that the apostle had a passion for the lost in general, but 2 Timothy 2:1-4 is more specific. At the end of his ministry, Paul urged Timothy to lead his church in praying for the lost, namely for “kings and those who are in high positions.”

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“Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”

— *1 Corinthians 9:16*

---

Paul had been beaten to the point of death more than once, flogged multiple times, stoned, mocked, and even shipwrecked. He was hated, betrayed, ever on the run, regularly starving, and always exhausted just to proclaim the gospel (2 Cor 11:24-27). These hardships help us grasp the depth of Paul’s love for Jesus Christ and for the lost.

Furthermore, Jews regarded the gospel as blasphemous, and Gentiles viewed it as foolishness (1 Cor 1:23). Though the Roman government had begun to persecute Christians, Paul never returned hate with hate.

QUESTION: Why do we expect the world to treat us better than it treated our Lord?

God had chosen Paul to take the gospel to “Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15), and Paul rejoiced that in the end, he had fulfilled his calling (2 Tim 4:7). Where do we see Paul ministering to kings and other political leaders?

- Ministered to Sergius Paulus, the Proconsul of Cyprus (Acts 13:6-12).
- Ministered to Governor Felix (Acts 24)
- Ministered to King Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:23-26:32).
- Ministered to Caesar Nero (Acts 25:10-12; 2 Tim 4:16-17).
- Ministered to the entire Imperial Guard in Rome (Phil 1:13)
- Ministered often in capital cities (8 of the 14 cities in which Paul ministered).

Paul’s concern for “kings and those who are in high positions” started when the Lord called him into ministry and continued throughout his life. Thus, his command to Timothy wasn’t a new emphasis but an old one.

*If...a principle of true religion should...gain ground, there is no estimating the effects on public morals, and the consequent influence on our political welfare.*

— William Wilberforce

## KEY PRINCIPLES

- The salvation of people all around should weigh heavily upon our hearts, so heavily that we regularly pray for their salvation.
- Evangelistic prayer is key to living a “peaceful and quiet life.”
- Though politics should concern us as Christians, paramount is whether our leaders know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

### Praying for Your Leaders

Proverbs 21:1 tells us, “The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever he will.” God is sovereign over all that happens in this world, and He “turns” the hearts of kings however He pleases to accomplish His purposes.

Below are some of our state and federal leaders in central Illinois...

U. S. Senator Dick Durbin

U. S. Senator Tammy Duckworth

Congressman Rodney Davis

Congressman Daren LaHood

State Senator Andy Manar

State Senator Sam McCann

State Senator Bill Brady

State Rep. Sue Scherer

State Rep. Tim Butler

State Rep. Sara Wojcicki-Jimenez

Most, if not all, of the above leaders are affiliated with a church and would affirm some faith in God. Circle at least two from the above list, and commit to pray for each daily throughout the course of this class.

How should you pray? Unless you personally know someone, it is difficult to do more than mention a name with a brief request to God. Consider some of the following verses that you could use to pray our political leaders...

1 Timothy 2:1-4

*Lord, open the eyes of our political leaders and save them.*

John 15:1-5

*Lord, I thank You we have some leaders who know You. May they abide in Your Word despite all the temptation that surround them.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

*Lord, I pray that our leaders would not lean on their own understanding but acknowledge You, the source of all wisdom.*

Psalms 2

*Lord, we know that many in power rage against You and will be broken in pieces one day. May they humble themselves and be saved.*

Isaiah 26:3-4

*Lord, may our leaders place their trust in You and find peace*

*Pray over the Scriptures. Christians just setting out on the path of prayer sometimes pray for everything they can think of, glance at their watches, and discover they have been at it for all of three or four minutes. This experience sometimes generates feelings of defeat, discouragement, even despair. A great way to begin to overcome this problem is to pray through various biblical passages.*

— D. A. Carson

## WEEK 3

### *Submission: A Biblical Response to Government*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

A church in Phoenix, Arizona has a ministry to the homeless. Every Sunday the church has a breakfast with sausage, pancakes, and eggs offered during the morning service, and it seems more than 100 people who are homeless attend.

Legitimate concerns soon arose. Neighbors questioned the church about its breakfast ministry, and city officials soon followed. Everyone expressed appreciation for helping the homeless, but they encouraged the church to stop busing homeless people into their neighborhood. *Why not feed the homeless where they reside?*

The church refused to modify its ministry and challenged the city with a lawsuit. The city would not back down. Officials maintained that zoning ordinances prevent churches in residential areas from acting as charity dining halls. Though the two parties reached a settlement, was this really a battle the church needed to fight?

**QUESTION:** Rebellion or contempt towards authority is common to man, even among Christians. In what ways do you struggle to submit to the authorities in your life (ex: employer, spouse, church elders, elected officials)?

The first Christians were Jews who had grown up despising Rome's occupation of Israel. As Christianity rapidly spread among the Gentiles, Christian beliefs became known and mocked. Paul wrote Romans in this environment (mid-50's A.D.) as the government was beginning to notice Christians. First Peter, however, was written a decade later when the government's disdain for Christians had erupted into "fiery trials" (1 Pet 4:12). Regardless of the environment, both apostles gave the same exhortation: submit.

Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 are foundational texts regarding a believer's attitude towards civil authorities.

## I. Romans 13:1-7

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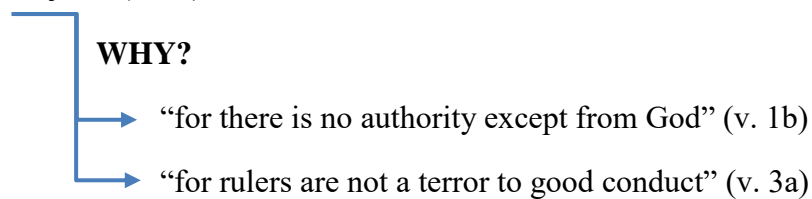
“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”

— *Romans 13:1-7*

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Scripture exhorts submission to governing authorities and then provides two concrete reasons. The first is theological: God establishes all authority. The second reason is practical: “Good conduct” or submission doesn’t provoke the authorities to punish you.

“Be Subject” (v. 1a)



A government can persecute anyone, but authorities *normally* do not devote revenue to persecute law-abiding citizens. Emperor Trajan expressed this as a policy when he explained it is a waste of revenue to persecute Christians (110 A.D.). Moreover, Paul encourages us not to view government as the enemy who is always out to get us, because “rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.”

**QUESTION:** If God establishes all authority, how should this impact the ways we talk about leaders on the both sides of the political aisle?



Notice the phrases Romans 13 uses to describe political leaders:

- “Instituted by God.”
  - “What God has appointed.”
- } Refers to people, not government in a general sense
- “God’s servant for your good.”
  - “An avenger who carries out God’s wrath.”      *See also Isaiah 10:5-6*
  - “Ministers of God.”

**QUESTION:** It is easy to harbor a negative view of government. How does this square with Paul’s view of government, which was rather positive?

*It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the history of the interpretation of Romans 13:1–7 is the history of attempts to avoid what seems to be its plain meaning.*

— Douglas Moo

Romans 13:5-6 summarizes what has already been said, but verse 7 culminates with a specific application: Submission involves paying your taxes.

During the first decade of this century, the IRS estimated that the United States had lost approximately \$3.1 trillion dollars due to tax evasion. It isn’t hard to cheat on your taxes, even to feel it’s justified. First-century Christians wrestled with the temptation, too. These verses, however, teach us that government officials are some of God’s agents/ministers. To cheat them is to cheat the One who appointed them.

**QUESTION:** Romans 12:1-2 sets the broader context for chapters 12-15. How does submitting to earthly authorities relate to being a “living sacrifice” unto God?

## II. 1 Peter 2:13-17

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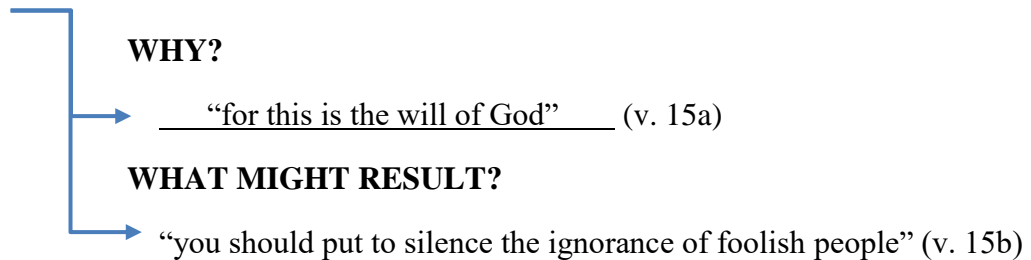
“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

— 1 Peter 2:13-17

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Peter wrote soon after Rome had burned to ash. Nero blamed Christians for the fire and fanned the fury of his people against the church. Peter, like Paul, exhorted believers not to react or return evil with evil. Instead, continue to submit to the authorities.

“Be Subject” (v. 13)



Submission is God’s will, but Peter also wants us to see that submission is proactive. More than obeying the law, submission involves “doing good” to those in positions of authority. Thus, a submissive spirit seeks to bless leaders who are, at times, not worthy of blessing.

*Government is more than a nuisance to be put up with; it is an institution established by God to accomplish some of His purposes on earth.*

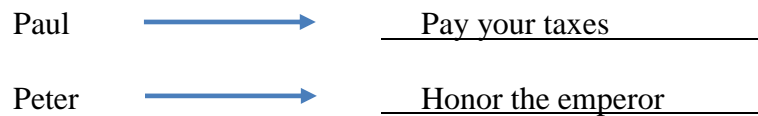
— Douglas Moo

**QUESTION:** Peter connects submission to living “as people who are free.” How might an insubordinate, rebellious spirit actually enslave you?

Submitting to a good leader is easy and says little about your faith. When we yield ourselves to poor leaders, even striving to bless them, our conduct may “silence the ignorance of foolish people.” More literally, submission places a “muzzle” upon the ignorant. It leaves the world with nothing negative to say against us.

Be encouraged that God may use your submissive spirit to convict those who see it and bring them to salvation (1 Pet 2:12).

Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 end on a tough note. The apostles knew that believers resented their authorities and sometimes refused to pay taxes. So, what does submission look like?



**QUESTION:** Submission is not a synonym for obedience. However, as you reflect upon this study, how would you define submission?

As we conclude this study, look at Acts 23:1-5. While on trial, Paul insulted Ananias, the High Priest. Paul’s response is instructive for us, because rather than double-down on the insult he quickly confessed his sin—he had just spoken “evil of a ruler.” May we take this to heart, meditate upon this study and repent as needed. May we consider how to honor our leaders today.

#### KEY PRINCIPLES

- God is the source of all authority. How we treat our authorities directly honors or dishonors the God who established each of them.
- Submission to secular authority is an act of spiritual worship.
- “Be subject... for the Lord’s sake” indicates that submission isn’t a reward given to those who seem worthy. Whether the authority is honorable or dishonorable, we are called to a life of submission to our authorities.
- The worse the authority over us, greater is the opportunity to exalt Christ.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE  
Honoring Your Leaders

Using the contact information below, contact the leaders for whom you have committed to pray. Send a card or letter, leave a message by phone with a staffer, visit the office in person, or even use Twitter.

**U. S. Senator Dick Durbin**

525 S. 8th Street  
Springfield, IL 62703  
*phone:* (217) 492-4062  
*twitter:* SenatorDurbin

**U. S. Senator Tammy Duckworth**

8 South Old State Capitol Plaza  
Springfield, IL 62701  
*phone:* (217) 528-6124  
*twitter:* SenDuckworth

**Congressman Rodney Davis**

2833 S Grand Ave. East  
Springfield, IL 62703  
*phone:* (217) 791-6224  
*twitter:* RodneyDavis

**Congressman Daren LaHood**

235 South 6th St.  
Springfield, IL 62701  
*phone:* (217) 670-1806  
*twitter:* RepLaHood

**State Senator Andy Manar**

119A Capitol Building  
Springfield, IL 62706  
*phone:* (217) 782-0228  
*twitter:* AndyManar

**State Senator Sam McCann**

307 Capitol Building  
Springfield, IL 62706  
*phone:* (217) 782-8206  
*twitter:* mccann\_sam

**State Senator Bill Brady**

309G Capitol Building  
Springfield, IL 62706  
*phone:* (217) 782-6216  
*twitter:* Bill\_Brady

**State Rep. Sue Scherer**

E-2 Stratton Office Building  
Springfield, IL 62706  
*phone:* (217) 524-0353

**State Rep. Tim Butler**

1128-E Stratton Office Building  
Springfield, IL 62706  
*phone:* (217) 782-0053  
*twitter:* RepTimButler

**State Rep. Sara Wojcicki-Jimenez**

E-1 Stratton Office Building  
Springfield, IL 62706  
*phone:* (217) 782-0044

*What should I say?* Rarely do lawmakers receive an encouraging card or hear a kind word. They vote on nearly 6,000 pieces of legislature each year (ex: naming roads, minor changes to older acts, code updates, etc.). We can always be thankful for *some* of the work they do on our behalf. Express your appreciation by sending a card.

You could also share that you are praying for this leader on behalf of Southern View Chapel. Share you are praying for safety in travel, good health, or a strong family—all of these are blessings. Quote a verse such as Proverbs 3:5-6, and share that you hope this person will “trust in the Lord.”

## WEEK 4

### *The Christian and Civil Disobedience*

#### INTRODUCTION

Regularly challenging authority is not a sign of spiritual maturity. A sign of growth is that you look for ways to work in harmony or cooperate with those God has placed over you. Submission is the normal Christian life, but a time may come when you must *quietly* disobey (Acts 5:29).

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“But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.”  
— Acts 5:29

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Acts 5 records the second time the apostles were arrested for preaching. An angel appeared in the middle of the night to release them, and by morning, the apostles went back to preaching. The Jewish authorities arrested and “strictly charged” them to stop. Thus, Peter’s reply that “we must obey God rather than men.”

The apostles received 39 lashes (a severe beating) for disobeying the authorities. However, “they left the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus” (Acts 5:41-42).

**DEFINITION:**      **Civil disobedience** is the refusal to comply with certain laws and regulations or the refusal to pay certain taxes and fines. Civil disobedience is an illegal activity.

God’s will is that His people honor their authorities. We should never dishonor those above us, unless we’re certain it would be right to disobey them. Moreover, the question before us is: When would it please God to see His people commit a crime?

*The fact that authorities may act criminally changes nothing as to God’s will regarding their establishment among men.*

— R. C. H. Lenski

QUESTION: What are some differences between dishonor and disobedience?

Acts 5 provides three principles to guide our discussion of civil disobedience.

- 1) The condition for civil disobedience.
- 2) The extent of civil disobedience.
- 3) The reason or motive for civil disobedience.

### **I. The Condition for Civil Disobedience**

Our nation, like many others, started with a revolution against authority. According to the Declaration of Independence, rebellion was justified because the King of Great Britain had become “destructive” to the “unalienable rights” of his American colonies. By “appealing to the Supreme Judge,” the colonists declared themselves “absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown.”

The Declaration is a powerful document, well-crafted, thorough, and logical. The case for rebellion was buttressed with twenty-seven reasons. Yet, none of the reasons accuse the king of restricting worship or of compelling his subjects to sin. None of the reasons, in fact, even mention God. King George III may have been a tyrant, but so was Nero... and the apostles didn’t rebel.

#### THE APOSTLES’ DILEMMA

Called to speak as Christ’s “witnesses”  
*Acts 1:8*

Charged “not to speak or teach” about Christ  
*Acts 4:18*

It is critical to notice that one authority had to be disobeyed if the other was to be obeyed. There was no conceivable way the apostles could obey God and man at the same time.

Acts 5 shows us that civil disobedience honors God only when authorities require God's people to sin. In many cases, however, a third option is available.

A recent example pertains to the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act (2010). This act required all state departments and agencies along with those who receive state funds to recognize homosexual unions. Many adoption agencies required state funding to remain open, some of which would not recognize these unions. Thus, the agencies had three options:

- 1) Disobey God by allowing homosexual couples to adopt children.
- 2) Disobey the state by receiving funds while refusing homosexual couples.
- 3) Obey God and the state by shuttering the adoption agency.  
(some agencies chose this option)

Civil disobedience is a forced decision that comes when all other options have been *completely* exhausted. When there is no conceivable way to obey God and man, God's will is clear. He desires His people to obey Him despite the cost.

## **II. The Extent of Civil Disobedience**

The German Confessing Church produced the Barmen Declaration (1934). This declaration proclaimed the Word of God as the sole source of revelation with Jesus Christ as the one true Lord. It also rejected the Nazi's subjugation of the church.

Leaders of the Confessing Church opposed the government to varying degrees. Some pastors, such as Martin Niemöller, preached against Hitler and suffered. Others engaged in a plot to assassinate Hitler and to overthrow the Third Reich. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of these men, and he was executed when the plot failed.

QUESTION: The Third Reich was unquestionably evil. Few men had the courage to speak against the German Führer, and even fewer acted as Bonhoeffer to end his reign. Would you have supported Bonhoeffer in some small way? Please explain.

Notice in Acts 5 that the apostles disobeyed their authorities only by preaching. Their disobedience, however, went no further.

God had called these men to preach, and the authorities ordered them to stop preaching in Jerusalem. They disobeyed only where the commands of God and man conflicted. Thus, the apostles did not fan any flames of revolution or malign their authorities. They disobeyed where necessary, accepted the consequences, and continued in their ministries.

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“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men”  
— *Romans 12:18*

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Civil disobedience should never become the church’s focus. Christians are called to go the extra mile to pursue peace with everyone wherever possible (Rom 12:18). When believers must disobey, their actions should never escalate into civil rebellion.

### **III. The Motive for Civil Disobedience**

Tax evasion is a popular form of civil disobedience. One man in Oregon, Michael Bowman, has refused to file a tax return since 1999. He believes that if tax dollars are being used for sinful activities, he has a Christian duty to withhold them.

It seems, however, that the apostle Paul would have rebuked Bowman’s choice (Rom 13:7). Bowman may consider himself persecuted, but his tax evasion exemplifies the use of Christianity “as a cover-up for evil” (1 Pet 2:16). How so? There’s much to be gained by not paying your taxes and making it seem Christian.

When the apostles disobeyed their authorities, observe the following:

- 1) The consequences \_\_\_\_\_. The apostles received a beating so severe they could have died, and this was followed by imprisonment. They disobeyed knowing there was nothing to be gained but excruciating pain and torment. Disobedience was not advantageous.
- 2) Their attitude \_\_\_\_\_. They disobeyed to identify with Christ. They rejoiced that “they had been counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name” (Acts 5:41). The apostles’ disobedience was motivated by a desire to exalt Jesus Christ.



## FURTHER STUDY

Look up each example in the chart below and fill out the remaining two columns. Answer if the example of disobedience is biblically justified and then briefly explain why or why not. The first row has been provided for you.

<b>Example of Civil Disobedience</b>	<b>Biblically Justified?</b>	<b>Why or why not?</b>
Exodus 1:15-21 <i>Hebrew midwives</i>	Yes	<i>Disobey, because murder is sinful.</i>
Exodus 5:1 <i>Moses and Aaron</i>		
2 Samuel 15:32-37 <i>Hushai</i>		
1 Kings 18:1-4 <i>Obadiah</i>		
Daniel 3 <i>Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego</i>		
Daniel 6 <i>Daniel</i>		
Acts 4:17-19 <i>Apostles</i>		
Revelation 13 <i>Faithful Christians</i>		

## WEEK 5

### *Evangelicals in the Political Arena Before the 1970s*

Evangelicals have had a voice in politics throughout American history. These next two weeks will trace this history from the 1800s to the present. These weeks have been divided into two periods: before and after the 1970s.

DEFINITIONS: Throughout the 1800s, an evangelical was a Protestant Christian. Whether conservative or liberal, all Protestants were evangelicals.

By early 1900s, a fundamentalist was a theologically conservative evangelical, one ready to do “battle royal” for the fundamentals.

Evangelicals and fundamentalists divided in the 1940s. Fundamentalists urged doctrinal purity and separation from the world, while the New Evangelicals urged evangelistic outreach and engagement with the world.

QUESTION: During class as you fill in the detailed outline, consider the effects of theology. How did bad theology contribute to the actions taken by evangelicals at different periods? What stood out to you most?

QUESTION: The mission of the church is to “make disciples” (Matt 28:18-20). Does this mean Christians shouldn’t care about social problems such as extreme poverty or child abuse? Please explain.

## DETAILED OUTLINE

### I. Making America Great (1800-1865)

As revivalism swept America, evangelicals set their sights on perfecting society.

#### A. Revivalism and Christian Perfection

The Second Great Awakening (1800-1830) was a period of religious enthusiasm and surging church membership. Converts believed the “awakening” was the dawn of the millennial age where Christ would soon return. They needed only to pursue personal holiness and the perfection of America.

Charles Finney is viewed as the father of high-pressure revivalism. Finney believed he could use any means possible to save sinners and complete the work of the gospel in his lifetime. Finney’s unbounded optimism fit well with the American spirit. His emphasis upon personal choice squared with democracy and personal liberty. The emotionalism of his revivals aligned with Romanticism.

As opposed to man’s inability (Calvinism), the Second Great Awakening stressed man’s ability (Arminianism).

#### B. A Righteous Empire

Energized by the Second Great Awakening, evangelicals set their sights on perfecting American society. Advances were made against drinking, Sabbath-breaking, prostitution, Catholicism, and Freemasonry. Evangelicals also supported orphanages, homeless shelters, and the fight for women’s suffrage. Many even viewed the Civil War as an apocalyptic battle necessary to establish Christ’s kingdom

Evangelicals formed countless organizations to fight social problems, and they had varying degrees of involvement in the political arena. Political activism, however, was not central to the movement nor was activism nationally organized.

### II. Cracks in the Evangelical Foundation (1865-1915)

Evangelicalism began to split apart as massive changes swept through America and challenged the movement in ways it was unprepared to respond.

#### A. Social Changes

More than ½ million immigrants per year came to America throughout these years. Most immigrants came from Europe, fleeing persecution or famine. They were eager for work, and the Industrial Revolution provided the jobs. Urbanization exploded during this time as factories drew millions towards the cities.

Poverty, however, increased as never before. Slums developed, sanitation declined, and worker strikes became common. The moral and religious consensus of the nation was shifting as well. How would evangelicals respond? Conservative evangelicals, such as D. L. Moody, said the gospel could address all of America's problems. Liberal evangelicals emphasized social action and political reform.

#### B. Theological Changes

Higher criticism, as applied to the Bible, crept into America. Seminaries began to view Scripture with skepticism until few conservative seminaries remained. At the mainstream level, few noticed or even read *The Fundamentals*. Evangelical churches were growing and sending out more missionaries than ever before. The serious social and theological changes, however seemed peripheral.

### III. Reclaiming Christian America (1915-1925)

The horrors of WWI created a panic among evangelicals to preserve Christian civilization. Evangelicals mobilized to engage the political arena as never before.

#### A. Sound the Alarm!

WWI (1914-1917) awoke evangelicals. Patriotism surged against the backdrop of anti-German fury. Fear gripped evangelical leaders, such as Billy Sunday and William Jennings Bryan, that America could descend to the barbary of Germany. The evangelical fight soon became one "for the very survival of Christian civilization."

Within evangelicalism arose a more militant wing, fundamentalists.

#### B. Humiliation and Defeat

Evangelicals, namely fundamentalists, fought for the moral and religious purity of America. They supported strict immigration laws, even ballooning clan membership in the fight for racial purity. Evangelicals condemned the spread of Communism, ensured that women could vote, and joined with liberals in the fight for Prohibition.

The focus of evangelical fury, however, was biological evolution. Dozens of anti-evolution organizations formed and fought politically to eradicate every hint of evolutionary teaching in the public schools. This fight reached its zenith in the Scopes Trial (1925). Though evangelicals won the battle, they lost the war. The movement pulled away from politics and went into isolation.

#### IV. A Great Reversal (1925-1940)

The Scopes Trial may have been the most unexpected watershed in evangelical history. Literally overnight, evangelical activism halted, and the movement went into isolation.

##### A. Aliens and Strangers

Conservative evangelicals realized that they no longer represented American Christianity or American Protestantism. Fundamentalists hoped the Scopes Trial would show the overwhelming authority of the Bible against evolution. Yet, William Jennings Bryan failed spectacularly in this battle and humiliated them.

Evangelical anti-Catholic leagues declined as it seemed a lost cause, and euphoria over Prohibition evaporated. Conservative evangelicals quickly became the only remaining supporters of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Anti-evolution, anti-Catholic, and anti-alcohol battles all failed to change the nation as fundamentalists had hoped. These fights only heightened the distinction between fundamentalists and the average American. Since public sentiment had turned against conservative evangelicals, they now made few attempts to influence public policy.

##### B. An Anti-Social Gospel

Evangelicals in the 1800s had emphasized either social work or the gospel. By the 1920s, the divide had become as black and white. Liberal Christians would continue to emphasize social work and benevolence, while fundamentalists would continue to preach the gospel. This division had become so sharp that fundamentalists viewed social ministry with suspicion.

## V. Reforming Fundamentalism (1940-1970)

Many old-school fundamentalists emerged from WWII with an evangelistic zeal. These new evangelicals wanted to engage the world, though increasingly at the expense of doctrine.

### A. Diverging Paths

The new evangelicals were fundamentalist leaders and intellectuals such as Carl F. H. Henry and Harold Ockenga. They founded Fuller Seminary (1947) to promote solid theology and to encourage world outreach. Numerous evangelical outreaches sprang up: InterVarsity Fellowship (1941), Campus Crusade (1948), and Fellowship of Christian Athletes (1954). Fundamentalists such as Bob Jones, John Rice, and John Norris emphasized doctrinal purity instead. The ministry of Billy Graham led to the clear break between these groups.

The two paths of evangelicalism shared the same doctrine in the 1940s. Both groups condemned the spread of Communism as an existential threat, and both believed that national prosperity rested upon a national revival. One group, however, was more optimistic than the other. Furthermore, neither the old fundamentalists nor the new evangelicals emphasized political activism.

### B. The Times They are A Changin'

The moral decline of America in the 50s and 60s was alarming. The sexual revolution challenged conservative morality, and removing prayer from public schools didn't help (1962). The New Evangelicals discovered agreement with non-fundamentalists and even some theological liberals on moral issues. Thus, theological distinctions diminished. The moral issues became urgent. Evangelicals needed only the right leaders to mobilize them into a political force to take back America.

## WEEK 6

### *Evangelicals in the Political Arena After the 1970s*

Evangelicals have had a voice in politics throughout American history. These next two weeks will trace this history from the 1800s to the present. These weeks have been divided into two periods: before and after the 1970s.

DEFINITION: An evangelical today is someone who has had a conversion experience, seeks to express the gospel, has a particular regard for the Bible, and stresses the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

QUESTION: Evangelical leaders commonly used fear and anger to mobilize conservatives. What are some problems with this approach? What is a more biblical motivation for engaging government?

QUESTION: Reclaiming Christian civilization or “taking back America” are not biblical goals. What were some of the consequences when evangelicals pursued these goals?

## DETAILED OUTLINE

### I. From Saving Souls to Saving America (1970-1979)

Two unlikely fundamentalist pastors organized evangelical concern into political activism. They were Southern Baptist ministers, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. An unlikely scholar living in Switzerland, Francis Schaeffer, emerged with dire warnings and a call to action.

#### A. Leading the Charge

The new evangelicals desired to engage the world. Yet, America's sharp moral decline in the 1960s and 70s redirected their engagement. Jerry Falwell began to use his television and radio ministry to rally evangelicals to take political action. Pat Robertson did the same with his *700 Club*. Evangelicals had heard warnings and calls to repentance from Billy Graham. These men, however, called evangelicals to revive America through politics.

#### B. Making the Case

The decision of *Roe v. Wade* (1972) went unnoticed until Francis Schaeffer's *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979). If Robertson and Falwell led the charge for political activism, Schaeffer made the case. By the end of the 1970s, moral conservatives realized the awful implications of abortion-on-demand.

As theological distinctions diminished, moral distinctions grew in importance. Thus, evangelicals pursued fellowship with conservative Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and even some theological liberals. Vast coalitions, such as the Moral Majority (1979), formed.

American Protestants have historically linked their love of God to their love of country, their Christianity to their patriotism. As the nation slid, it seems many would agree that, "For the love of God, we must save America!"

### II. Married to the Republican Party (1980-1997)

The Christian Right was often lockstep with the Republican Party. They were faithful throughout these years, though their faithfulness was rarely rewarded.

#### A. Evangelicals Emergence

*Newsweek* had declared 1976 as the "Year of the Evangelical." The embers of their discontent would grow ablaze in the election of 1980.



Evangelicals emerged as a political force, well-organized and solidly behind Ronald Reagan. President Carter was a Southern Baptist with all the evangelical credentials. Reagan, however, gave the Christian Right a sense of importance at the outset of their relationship.

Voter registrations and political rallies bolstered evangelical influence in the elections of 1980 and '84. President Reagan continued to court evangelicals, and they endorsed him without hesitation. Evangelical leaders, however, such as Jerry Falwell and Paul Weyrich had been growing disappointed. They gave the President all they had, and in return, he gave them, “meaningless access.” The Christian Right could boast of little.

#### B. New Tactics, Same Results

Pat Robertson was so angry with the Republican Party that he ran for President in 1988 and created the Christian Coalition (1989).

Robertson selected Ralph Reed to lead the Coalition. Unlike other evangelical leaders, Reed had no fundamentalist roots nor was he a pastor. He was a young politico who believed the ends justify his means. Ultimately, Reed shifted evangelical activism to being “pro-family.”

The Christian Coalition distributed tens of millions of voting guides and bolstered conservative voters. In fact, evangelicals had become to Republicans what organized labor had been to Democrats.

Evangelicals won numerous political races, and their organizations were flood with financial support in the early 90s. Yet, other than Clarence Thomas’ nomination (1991), the Christian Right had few accomplishments.

### III. The Disillusioned and the Determined (1998-2008)

Political hardliners such as James Dobson believed Falwell, Robertson, and Reed failed because of their penchant for compromise. Others such as Cal Thomas now viewed the Right as biblically wrong. Nonetheless, evangelicals stood with George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004.

#### A. Political Victories

Focus on the Family (1977) emerged in the late 90s as the chief political platform for evangelicals. The Christian Right had regularly taken aim at Democrats. Dobson, however, took aim at Republicans. He excoriated politicians, by name, who received evangelical votes

without advancing the evangelical agenda. Demanding and uncompromising, Dobson pushed evangelicals to engage the world much differently.

The Right regained its stride with President George W. Bush, an evangelical who surrounded himself with evangelical advisors. Bush's first Presidential act was to announce a National Day of Prayer. He also established the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives and reinstated the Mexico City policy to end federal funding for abortions here and overseas (2001).

#### B. Politicizing Faith

Evangelicals identified more strongly with President Bush than they had with any former president. His faith was perceived as their faith, his initiatives as their initiatives, and his popularity translated to their popularity. Media attention of evangelicals did not tend to be negative during the president's first term (2000-04).

President Bush's approval ratings, however, slid during his second term. As Bush left office, evangelicals left the political arena experiencing the same negativity as their president. They could reflect upon some political victories. Yet, even evangelicals in the Bush Administration such as Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner admitted that the Christian Right had no influence upon America. As Dobson retired in 2009, he lamented that all the battles to save America were now lost: "We are awash in evil."

### IV. From the Wilderness to the Promised Land (2009- )

Evangelical voter turnout fell sharply, and Christian Right organizations struggled to raise support. A backlash had been growing against the Right, and an Evangelical Left began to emerge in politics. The Right, however, endured but coalesced around an unlikely candidate, the thrice-married celebrity and casino magnate, Donald J. Trump.

#### A. Backlash and the Evangelical Left

The politization of Christianity created a backlash by the next generation that gave rise to an evangelical left. These were not theological liberals but evangelicals such as Jim Wallis who believed the Bible also spoke about issues such as poverty and racism. Finding common ground with Democrats, the evangelical left helped to elect President Barak Obama.

**B. Loss of a Distinctly Christian Witness**

The prospect of having another U.S. President who would listen to conservative evangelicals and work to restore America was energizing. Whether eagerly or hesitantly, 81% of evangelicals voted to elect Donald Trump in 2016. With Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell, Jr., and Pat Robertson all endorsing Trump, Michael Gerson, Russell Moore, and others have questioned what's left of evangelicalism and its gospel witness.

## ENGAGING THE POLITICAL ARENA

The past two weeks have focused upon a history of evangelicals in the political arena. We will soon boil the entire class into five principles for engaging the political arena. In preparation for this, please review some of the statements issued by a variety of evangelical leaders. Read each one and then explain some of the problems you see (use Scripture as much as possible).

1. *If righteousness is going to prevail, if paganism is going to be turned back, then we must move to restore this nation to being a Christian nation. Otherwise we will lose the war for America's soul, and the United States as we know it will perish.* — Randall Terry.
2. *...there are bigger issues now, we can argue about theology later after we save the country.* — Jerry Falwell, Jr., speaking to Glenn Beck who is a Mormon.
3. *The new political philosophy must be defined by us in moral terms, packaged in non-religious language, and propagated throughout the country by our new coalition.* — Paul Weyrich.
4. *Christianity and Patriotism are synonymous terms... and hell and traitors are synonymous.* — Billy Sunday.
5. *All ills from which America suffers can be traced back to the teaching of evolution.* — William Jennings Bryan.

## WEEK 7

### *Testimony from Senator Dale Righter*

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Senator Dale Righter has served the 55<sup>th</sup> Senate District since 2003, after having served in the Illinois House of Representatives from 1997 to 2003. He currently serves as Republican Spokesman for the Appropriations I Committee and the Executive Appointments Committee. Additional committee assignments include Assignments, Human Services, Appropriations II, Insurance, and Veterans Affairs.

Senator Righter graduated from Eastern Illinois University with a B.S. in Accounting (1988) and received his Juris Doctor from St. Louis School of Law (1991). He has been an attorney from 1997 to the present.

Senator Righter has two sons, Jonathan and Benjamin. Benjamin attends Eastern Illinois University majoring in Physics and Engineering. Jonathan attends the United States Military Academy at West Point, majoring in Geographic Information Sciences and Technology. Senator Righter is a regular member of our Bible studies in the Capitol, is eager to grow in Christ, and has been an encouraging friend to us for many years.

#### **TIME OF QUESTION AND ANSWER**

You are welcome to ask Senator Righter more about his faith, his experiences in Illinois politics, difficulties of being a Christian, or how you can pray for him. Questions about politics or the inner workings of the political arena may be fine as well (just be gracious).

## WEEK 8

### *A Biblical Philosophy for Engaging Government Five Principles*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

John Calvin wrote a letter on behalf of Geneva's city council (1539). The city had Protestant leanings, but leaders had expelled Calvin two years prior. Cardinal Sadolet heard of Calvin's expulsion and wrote a warm letter asking the prodigal city to return to the faith. *And don't forget that eternal life is precious!* In other words, return to the Catholic Church or you'll be damned.

Geneva's city council asked Calvin to respond on their behalf, and the Reformer thundered to the Cardinal...

*Your zeal for eternal life... keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God... Set before man, as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the glory of God!*

— John

Cardinal Sadolet offered eternal life like a salesman offering fire insurance. *Get it now, or you'll regret it later!* Thus, the gospel becomes the good news of self-preservation that leaves sinners "entirely devoted" to themselves.

Calvin believed that God's glory is the central issue of all things in life. As Christians, we are no longer to live for our own hopes and dreams—we belong to Christ. Thus, the question we should ask in all things is: How will this word or that deed exalt Jesus Christ?

**QUESTION:** Evangelicals have been zealous to live in an upright nation. Do you think that, in general, this zeal has been a biblical pursuit of God's glory or a man-centered pursuit? Please explain.

The intent of this final class is to provide five principles for biblically engaging the political arena. A "zeal to illustrate the glory of God" must have at least these five...

## I. A Biblical Concept of Government .

We saw in week 1 that God ordained government to manage creation and to provide order by restraining evil (Gen 1-9). Conservative evangelicals tend to favor small government, but they have often expected government to do something quite large—shape society. Is this a biblical expectation? Is it even possible?

Evangelicals began the fight for Prohibition after the Civil War (1861-65), even forming the National Prohibition Party (1869). By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, prohibition laws governed more than one-half of America. Moody's *The Institute Tie* rejoiced and proclaimed in 1908 that “revival is in the air!”

However, soon after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment passed, the price of grapes increased tenfold as the demand for alcohol skyrocketed. Speakeasies and crime rings exploded, especially in Chicago under Governor Len Small. This wasn't the national revival that evangelicals anticipated.

*Politics is the place where the ideas that have already shaped society find their legislative applications.*

— Michael Horton

The Bible is the Word of the Living God. This Book is the basis for all morality, and government should strive to uphold it. Yet, governments are made and moved by men. They will not uphold a standard that society has come to reject. Governments are not able to fulfill their God-given design without the church making disciples.

QUESTION: The church and the state are two institutions established by God. Which institution could God use to transform a society? By what means?

We have often heard that if more evangelicals voted, we could “take back” America. The Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and Focus on the Family successfully registered millions of evangelical voters. They accomplished much at the polls and had some political victories, but they had no effect upon society. Government was not designed to transform the world.

## II. A Biblical Attitude Toward Political Leaders .

Evangelicals of the 1980s and 1990s saw few legislative victories, while the attitude of society on family issues became more liberal. Who was to blame for the lack of progress? Evangelicals blamed government.

At the 2005 conference, “Confronting the Judicial War on Faith,” Jerry Falwell and Tony Perkins condemned the federal judiciary. Perkins accused the judiciary of being a greater threat to America than terrorism, while Alan Keyes called it “the focus of evil.” James Dobson went so far as to compare the Supreme Court with the Ku Klux Klan.

*As the apostle Paul urges us to obey and honor the “governing authorities” we must remember that he is not speaking of a political system consistent with “traditional values.” He was speaking of a bloodthirsty and pagan Caesar, a government directly responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.*

— Russell Moore

Political rallies and certain conferences energize evangelicals, but do they help us better honor and submit to our authorities? Often, they do the opposite, even demonizing a potential mission field.

Both Paul and Peter taught that submission to authority is normative to the Christian life (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13). Submission does not mean believers shouldn’t engage their political leaders. We can disagree, even must disagree with our leaders at times.

A submissive heart, however, isn’t disrespectful and threatening. Rather, it strives to show honor and be a blessing. Believers who are “submissive to rulers and authorities” strive to “speak evil of no one” even in the political arena (Rom 13:1; Titus 3:1).

## III. A Biblical Foundation for Political Positions .

While campaigning in 1980, an exasperated President Jimmy Carter declared, “The Bible doesn’t say how you balance the federal budget!” Evangelical leaders had elevated the most debatable issues to the level of transcendent biblical absolutes. Examples include the Panama Canal give-away, military spending, a flat tax system, and President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative,.

The Bible doesn’t reveal the mind of God on net-neutrality or the intricacies of foreign policy. We must accept that while our personal views matter, we are not prophets speaking on behalf of God Himself.



**QUESTION:** All of us have political issues that matter deeply to us. List some of yours, circle the ones that are *clearly* taught in Scripture, and provide 2-3 verses for support.

Paul Weyrich had urged evangelicals to use “non-religious” language in the political arena. In the 1990s, Ralph Reed encouraged evangelicals to define themselves as “pro-family.” Though evangelicals still affirm the authority of the Bible, they rarely use it to support any of their political positions. Margaret Mitchell of the University of Chicago reached this conclusion after studying hundreds of evangelical websites, statements, and papers. The Bible was hardly to be found.

If God’s Word is foundational to our thinking and reasoning, we *need* to show it. This would mean that when talking about abortion, we explain that the unborn is human life (Psa 139:13-16) and that human life is God’s image (Gen 1:26-28). When speaking about transgenderism, we explain God’s authority to create life and that He created human life as male and female (Gen 5:2).

These short answers are not meant to end all discussion, but they do elevate God’s Word and show an unbelieving world that God’s Word is our foundation.

#### **IV. A Biblical Unity in the Political Arena .**

*The Fundamentals* was a series of doctrinal articles published prior to WWI. As theological liberalism made landfall in the United States, some evangelicals wanted to clarify the beliefs that unite them.

The Christian Right since the 1970s has united millions around political issues. The defining feature isn’t a set of doctrines or the gospel but politics. If the “Right” did not claim to be “Christian” this wouldn’t be a biblical issue, but it does. Organizations within the Right have included the Moral Majority, Focus on the Family, or The Faith and Freedom Coalition. Though none of these have “Christian” in the name, all strive to unite Christians in their political causes.

Action is emphasized above theology as the Christian Right unites evangelicals with non-evangelicals. The movement grows, our voices are heard, and America takes notice.

However, as Russell Moore explains, “We end up with a public witness in which Mormon talk-show hosts and serially-monogamous casino magnates and prosperity-gospel preachers are welcomed into our ranks, regardless of what violence they do to the gospel. They are, after all, ‘right on the issues.’”

QUESTION: Suppose a group of Bible-believing Christians band together to address an immoral piece of legislation. Should they allow anyone who shares their politics to join or only those who share their gospel? Please explain.

Some, such as Michael Lindsey, have praised evangelicalism for its “elastic orthodoxy.” Yet, evangelicalism has become so elastic, it has no definable orthodoxy. Elasticity allows unity around political issues, but such unity has come at a steep price. The “faith once for all delivered to the saints” is eroding all around us in America, and biblical Christianity has almost no more.

*What a splendid cleaning up of the Gentile cities it would have been if the Judaizers had succeeded in extending to those cities the observance of the Mosaic law, even including the unfortunate ceremonial observances! Surely Paul ought to have made common cause with teachers who were so nearly in agreement with him; surely he ought to have applied to them the great principle of Christian unity.*

*As a matter of fact, however, Paul did nothing of the kind; and only because he (and others) did nothing of the kind does the Christian Church exist today.*

— J. Gresham Machen

May we be a people who rally around our union with Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection has given us news that is far better and more needed than conservative politics.

## V. A Biblical Mission for Political Action.

For more than a century, evangelicals have viewed America as a battlefield with conservatives pitted against liberals in a struggle to save the nation. They have often agreed with Billy Sunday that, “Christianity and Patriotism are synonymous.”

George Marsden has explained at length that evangelicals have been driven to “restore America’s original Christian heritage.” Thus, we have been urged over the last forty years to “take back” America from a radical leftist agenda or to “prepare for inevitable destruction” if we fail. *We must reclaim our “Christian nation” for God!*

QUESTION: Why did Christ die? Did it have anything to do with preserving a culture or heritage? (see Romans 5:10-11)

A problem with the Christian Right is that it tends to claim the name of Christ while setting aside the Word of Christ and not doing the mission of Christ. This kind of activism or engagement is not biblical and should be rejected.

The church’s mission is to “make disciples” of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). Disciple-making is a lifelong process that begins with the church reaching out to the world with the gospel. We are “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor 5:20), men and women sent by our King to warn of impending judgment.

*Neither the Lord in His ministry nor the apostles in theirs set about to reform society as an end in itself... The final end of the church’s witness of good works is revealed everywhere in Scripture as that of causing others to acknowledge God and glorify Him.*

— Robert Saucy

The world needs to hear that sin is wrong and results in judgement. Look at John the Baptist, for instance. He spoke with Herod many times about “all the evil things” Herod had done (Lk 3:18-20). John was not a political activist trying to reform Perea and Galilee, but a faithful prophet. He confronted Herod for the sake of repentance.

Rather than confronting every issue disagreeable to us, the church needs to confront issues that pertain to sin and righteousness. Some believers will want to do this by engaging the political arena. May God use your confrontations of “Herod” to open His eyes to the truth of Jesus Christ.

## PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT APPLIED

Many churches since the 1970s have desired to contact political leaders regarding politics. The five principles could guide church leaders as follows:

- I.** By providing a biblical concept of civil government, the first principle teaches that government is not the key to changing society. Why confront a lawmaker's political position? A biblical reason may be concern that God will hold a leader accountable for governing in ways that dishonor Him.
- II.** Since God appoints all leaders, the second principle challenges believers to submit to God's appointments. Church leaders should cultivate a humble, submissive spirit when engaging political leaders.
- III.** When church leaders urge their people to contact a lawmaker, the third principle necessitates a biblical framework. God's people must show that God's Word is clearly for or against the issue at hand. Thus, the issue is a matter of sin and righteousness.
- IV.** A believer's union with Jesus Christ and other believers is a primary and not secondary issue. The fourth principle cautions church leaders from elevating politics to the point that they encourage their people to unite with those who preach another gospel.
- V.** The biblical mission of the church is to make disciples. The fifth principle shapes the entire goal for contacting a lawmaker. The hope is that this man or woman in political leadership may turn from sin and to Christ for salvation.

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## ABSTRACT

### TEACHING A THEOLOGY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT AT SOUTHERN VIEW CHAPEL IN SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019  
Faculty Supervisor: Michael S. Wilder, Ph.D.

This project is designed to teach a biblical theology of civil government to members of Southern View Chapel in Springfield, Illinois. Chapter 1 presents the context of this project, its rationale, purpose, goals, methodologies, definitions, and delimitations. Chapter 2 exegetes five passages of Scripture (Gen 4-11; Acts 5:29; Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 3:13-17; 1 Tim 2:1-4) to establish the origins of government, explain God's purposes for it, and encourage believers to respond biblically. Chapter 3 surveys the history of evangelicals in the political arena, provides a biblical critique, and proposes a philosophy for Christians to engage government. Chapter 4 describes the project itself and the content of the eight-week class. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of this project based upon completion of its goals.

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