



God & Government

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EVERY NATION
P R O D U C T I O N S

GOD & GOVERNMENT

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INTRODUCTION

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. ISAIAH 9:6-7

God's government or kingdom is a central theme throughout Scripture. It is usually defined as the realm wherein God rules as King. This is not just limited to heaven; it also includes God's rule on earth, where Jesus, God's anointed King, reigns. God's kingdom is not limited to a particular geographic area or people group. It encompasses His rule in heaven and earth, visible and invisible realms (Colossians 1:16-17). It can be experienced by anyone and in any sphere of society.

God's kingdom is very good (Genesis 1:31), and He appointed mankind to rule the earth as His representatives. However, man sinned and gave over the rule of the world to Satan (Luke 4:5-6; John 12:31-33; 14:30; 16:11), and a curse came upon the created order. Sin produced death, disease, poverty, discord, injustice, and a host of other evils entered the world. That is why Jesus, who is God, became man: to establish God's government on earth.

When King Jesus first came, He inaugurated the kingdom of God, which is characterized by peace, justice, righteousness (Isaiah 9:7), and joy (Romans 14:17). It started small, but will continue to increase until it permeates every sphere of society and transforms all of creation. He restored the original design of man ruling over all the world, while being under God's rule. Jesus defeated the enemy by His death and resurrection. When He ascended, He received all authority in heaven and on earth:

¹⁸"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

When Jesus commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, He wasn't just talking about discipleship on a Sunday afternoon at the local coffee shop. He was talking about discipling the nations. He also didn't just mean random people who happen to be everywhere. He was talking about specific nations and people groups that will one day gather around the throne and worship Him in a thousand tongues.

The calling of the people of God has always been like that: global and expansive, touching every sphere of life and society. The calling didn't start with the Great Commission in Matthew 28; it started right after God created Adam and Eve in Genesis. Throughout the biblical record, it has always been clear that humanity was called to declare the glory of God in the world.

When Jesus comes again, His kingdom will be fully consummated and all of creation will be transformed and placed under His benevolent rule forevermore. As His people, we have a role to play in the meantime. We are to disciple individuals, families, and nations so they would be redeemed and transformed according to God's design under His kingdom.

This is the heart of the Victory group material in your hands. Christ has been given authority over all of creation, in every sphere of society. There is no space in the created order that is not answerable to His Lordship. His government and kingdom are ever-increasing and everlasting. As His people, we are called to bring this kingdom to every sphere of society.

The Scriptures reveal three divinely ordained human authorities, which God has instituted to govern the affairs of earth: family, church, and civil government. Government provides direction, regulation, control, and restraint. It is like the steering wheel, gear shift, and gas and brake pedals of a car that enables the

driver to arrive at a destination. Government—saying this word alone can lead to a thousand reactions and statements, especially in our national context. No matter what your opinion is about this, government plays a role in everyone's lives. It refers not only to civil government, but to divine or human authority exercising the right and power to rule. But the good news is, when we submit to God's government, that is when we will experience His benevolent and caring, righteous and just rulership.

The material is therefore divided into four sections to cover the major spheres of government that should be brought into obedience to Christ's rule:

Self-Government under God: He Rules Our Lives

Self-government under God is foundational to the three other spheres of government God instituted: family, church, and civil government. Without self-government, all these will break down and fail. This section covers how we, under God's rule and power, will be able to govern key aspects of our lives: our hearts, tongues, bodies, time, and money.

God & Family Government: He Rules over Families

The family is known as the basic unit of society. God gave His mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and take dominion over all the earth to the first family He created. Society and all nations began through this family. Even today, families are the building blocks of a nation and play an essential role in it. The erosion of the family leads to the erosion of society. If we are to disciple a nation, we need to disciple families and teach them about God's purpose. In this section, we will study His purpose for the family and the structures He ordained to govern the relationships within it.

God & Church Government: He Is the Head of the Church

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which is His body, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and the chief instrument to glorify God and advance His kingdom in the nations. When the Church is governed according to Christ's ways, it will be healthy and equipped to carry out its mandate to make disciples of all nations. In this section, we will examine God's purpose for the Church in the world, the governmental order He established in the Church, and the roles of church leaders and members, both within the Church and the world.

God & Civil Government: He Is Lord of the Nations

The Bible boldly declares that *all authority in heaven and on earth* belongs to Jesus (Matthew 28:19) and that *there is no authority except from God* (Romans 13:1). Rulers and governments only derive their authority from God's authority over the nations. In this section, we will examine God's intention and purpose for civil government by looking at the biblical narrative. We will also look at how believers in the Bible and throughout history have responded to civil government. When we truly understand God's design for civil government and our role as a Church and individual believers, we will be better equipped to advance God's kingdom and disciple the nation.

The all-encompassing power and authority of Jesus over every sphere of society and created order serve as the basis and scope of the Church's discipleship mandate. We are obviously not there yet. So many people still don't know Jesus. Families are still broken. Societies still deny the name of Christ. Governments still stand in opposition to the rule of God. But the mandate of the Church to go and proclaim Jesus is as clear as ever. We are called to make disciples of all nations. The task is global, and yet we must start where we are—in our homes, in our communities, in our nation.

1 A Vision for God's Government

WARM-UP

- What comes to your mind when you hear the word “government”?
- What's one thing about your family you are grateful for? Why?
- What's one thing about your nation that you would like to change?

WORD *⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. ISAIAH 9:6-7*

If you were to create a government, what would it be like? Would it be characterized by peace, joy, justice, and righteousness? Would it consider the welfare and prosperity of its citizens above all else? Would crime, corruption, and poverty be eradicated? Can such a government exist? Yes! It's the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God—also known as God's government, rule, and reign—is a central theme throughout Scripture. It is usually defined as the realm wherein God rules as King. This is not just limited to heaven; it also includes God's rule on earth, where Jesus, God's anointed King, reigns. God's kingdom is not limited to a particular geographic area or people group. It encompasses His rule in heaven and earth, visible and invisible realms (Colossians 1:16–17). It can be experienced by anyone and in any sphere of society.

Today we'll get to know the kingdom of God better to have a vision of its goodness, desire to seek it, and be willing to advance it in all spheres of life. Here are three key characteristics of His kingdom.

1 | God's kingdom is very good.

26Then 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." 27So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." . . . 31And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

GENESIS 1:26-28, 31

God created everything *very good*. There was peace and abundance. Humanity lived in harmony with God and nature. God created humankind in His image and likeness to serve as His vice-regents. They were to fill the earth, take dominion, and govern, while they themselves were under God's rule. So everything—all the world, every sphere of society, and each human government structure—was to be governed under God's kingdom. Everything was meant to reflect His goodness. Would you want to live under such a benevolent ruler? Why?

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Jesus Christ came to restore and usher in God's kingdom in the world.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." **MATTHEW 28:18**

⁶"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this." **ISAIAH 9:6-7**

God's kingdom is very good (Genesis 1:31), and He appointed mankind to rule the earth as His representatives. However, man sinned and gave over the rule of the world to Satan (Luke 4:5-6; John 12:31-33; 14:30; 16:11) and a curse came upon the created order. Sin produced death, disease, poverty, discord, injustice, and a host of other evils in the world. That is why Jesus, who is God, became man: to establish God's government, restoring the original design of man ruling over all the world while being under God's rule. Jesus defeated the enemy by His death and resurrection. When He ascended, He received *all authority in heaven and on earth* (Matthew 28:18). His kingdom is characterized by peace, justice, righteousness (Isaiah 9:7), and also joy (Romans 14:17). Why do you think people are looking for this kind of kingdom?

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3 | God's kingdom is ever-increasing and everlasting.

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. ISAIAH 9:6-7

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." MATTHEW 28:18-20

When King Jesus first came, He inaugurated the kingdom of God. It started small, but will continue to increase until it permeates every sphere of society and transforms all of creation. God designed how we, as individuals, are to be governed. He also had an original design for families and civil society. Though the world system remains fallen and society isn't functioning according to God's design, He is zealously at work to transform and align these to His kingdom. When Jesus comes again, His kingdom will be fully consummated and all of creation will be transformed and placed under His benevolent rule forevermore. As His people, we have a role to play in the meantime. We are to disciple individuals, families, and nations. As a result, they will be redeemed and transformed according to God's design under His kingdom. How do Revelation 11:15 and 21:1-4 paint a picture of the

kingdom of God? Why should we make disciples and advance His kingdom where we are today?

In the succeeding lessons, we will look at God's intended design for different spheres of government: self-government under God, family, church, and civil government.

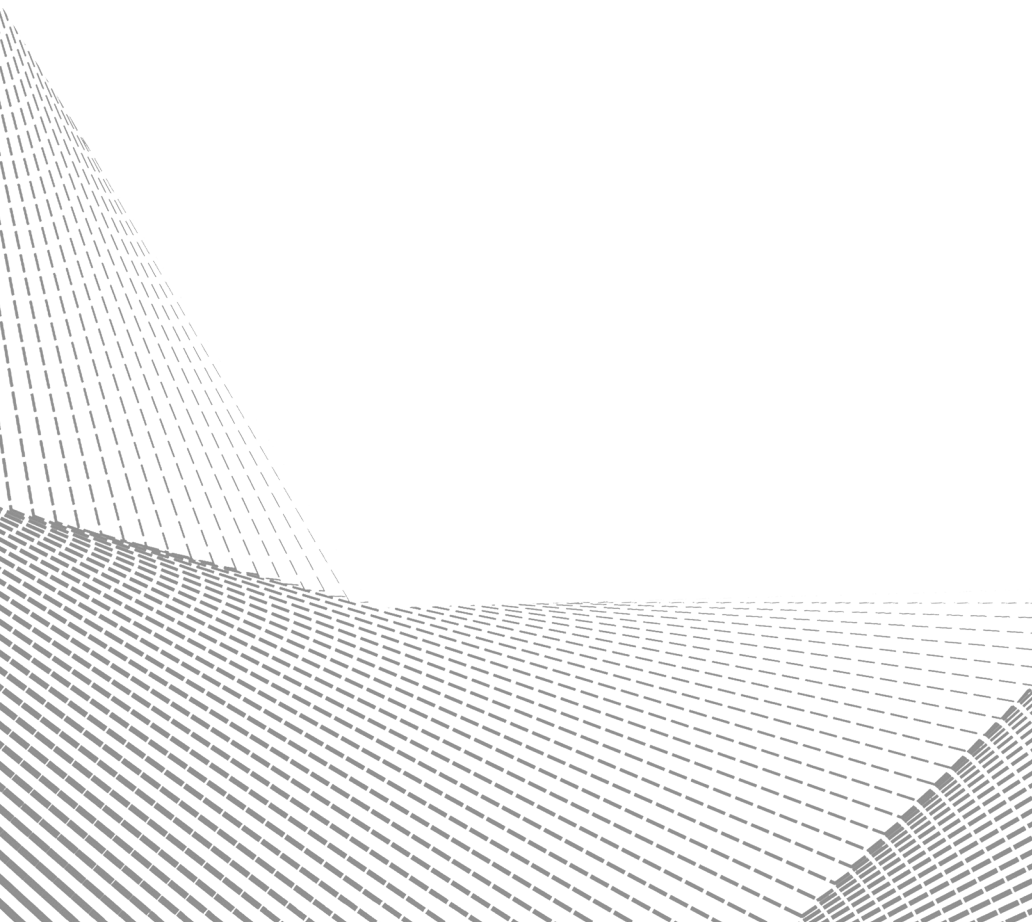
APPLICATION

- What did you learn from this lesson about God's kingdom and government? How do you think this applies to your life today?
- How do you think God's design for government should affect you individually, your family, your church, and your nation?
- How do you think you should live in light of God's ever-increasing and everlasting kingdom? What is your role in it?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His design and intent for His kingdom. Pray that you would have a growing understanding of this as each day passes.
- Pray that you would fulfill your role in God's kingdom through discipleship. Pray for your family and friends to know God and take part in advancing His kingdom.
- Pray for a vision of God's government that would be increasingly evident in your life, your family, and society. Ask God to transform different spheres of society for His glory.

Self-Government under God



2 God Ruling over Us

WARM-UP

- What is one of the most challenging things you do every day? Why do you do it anyway?
- Do you like following instructions? Why or why not? Recall an instance explaining this.
- Tell us about one decision you made this week. What factors did you consider in making it?

WORD *¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. GALATIANS 5:16-23*

Self-government under God is perhaps the most basic and foundational to the three spheres of government God instituted: the family, church, and civil government. Without self-government, all these will break down and fail.

In Luke 16:10, Jesus said that those who “*can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.*” Hugo Grotius, an

influential seventeenth-century philosopher, political thinker, jurist, and theologian, affirms this truth. He said that the ruler of a kingdom or nation should first be able to manage smaller units of civil government, such as a province or village. Before this, he should be able to govern his family and himself. And ultimately, he should first be ruled by God.

This is evident in Genesis, where God designed Adam and Eve to rule over creation, while being under God's rule. Though the term "self-government" or "government of self" cannot be found in Scripture, this concept is in the Bible and "self-control" is the term closest to it. In this lesson, we will study some basic truths found in the Bible concerning self-government and how we can apply them in our lives.

1 Self-government is only possible when we are first ruled by God.

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. . . . ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. GALATIANS

5:16–17, 19–21

(Read also **ROMANS 7:14–25**.)

In this passage, *flesh* does not just refer to our physical bodies. It refers to our fallen nature—sinful, worldly, and selfish. Left to ourselves, our flesh will rule over us, enslave us, and keep us from doing what's right. We cannot rule over the flesh on our own. But if we are governed and led by God's Spirit, we won't *gratify the desires of the flesh*. Among the works of the flesh presented in verses 19–21, which commonly derail our society's leaders and discredit them

before our eyes? What do you think would happen if we were unable to rule over our flesh?

2 | Self-government means allowing God to rule every area of our being and lives.

⁴"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ROMANS 12:1

To be ruled by God, we must first have a relationship with Him. This relationship will, in turn, affect every area of our lives. In Deuteronomy 6, God instructs His people to love Him with all of their hearts, souls, and might:

- The *heart* includes our inner-being: thoughts, will, and emotions.
- The *soul* refers to all the life that is in us.
- *Might* means all of our passionate energy and strength.

In Romans 12:1, believers are also taught to offer their bodies to God as a *living sacrifice*. This means giving our whole self to God in worship. The apostle Paul said that this is our reasonable and appropriate response to God's mercy to us in Christ. How is the term *living sacrifice* ironic? What do you think it means?

3

Self-government is the fruit of a growing relationship with God.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control . . .

GALATIANS 5:22-23

Though we can exercise limited self-control in some areas of our lives, we are unable to fully govern ourselves. The *fruit of the Spirit*, including self-control, only comes from a growing relationship with God. It is a natural byproduct, not something we can force or manipulate. As we continue to know God more, abide in Him, and yield to His work in our lives, we will be transformed and empowered to live self-controlled lives. What are some good habits you would like to start but have been unable to so far?

APPLICATION

- Is God the ruler of your life? Does He call the shots? How does this reflect in your life, and are you willing to submit to His Lordship?
- What is the value of self-control or self-government under God? How do you think the fruit of the Spirit will grow in your life and be evident to those around you?
- What is one thing you would like to accomplish, but have been unable to do with your own strength? Are you willing to rely on God's power and ability? How can you abide in Him this week and trust Him to work in your life?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the fruit of the Spirit that He gives each believer. Pray that you would follow the Holy Spirit's leading, resulting in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- Declare your dependence on God and your submission to His Lordship in every area of your life.
- Pray that your life under God's rule would lead others to know and surrender to Christ as well. Pray that your thoughts, words, and actions would honor God every day.

3 Governing Our Hearts

WARM-UP

- Would you consider yourself cautious or adventurous? Recall an instance explaining this.
- What do you do when you wake up every morning? Take us through your routine.
- Recall a time when a family member or friend mourned a loss. How did he or she grieve or process it?

WORD *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.* **PROVERBS 4:23**

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. **ROMANS 12:2**

In the Bible and particularly in the Old Testament, the heart does not just include our desires and emotions. It also refers to our mind and will. We are to *keep* or guard our hearts *with all vigilance* because all other areas of life spring from it. The truth is, the unredeemed heart is deceitful and sick (Jeremiah 17:9). This causes an internal struggle, and in addition, the fallen world pressures us to conform to its pattern. However, we are called to be *transformed by the renewal* of our minds. Governing the human heart (mind, will, desires, and emotions) is the key to governing oneself. This is the primary battleground. The good news is, God promised to give His people *a new heart* (Ezekiel 36:26). Today, we will examine Scripture to see how we can yield to God's work so we can govern our hearts.

Vigilantly guard your thoughts and align them with God's word.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. **PROVERBS 4:23**

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ . . . **2 CORINTHIANS 10:5**

Every day, we are bombarded with a multitude of thoughts—from ourselves and others. These thoughts often enter and dwell in our minds unfiltered. Scripture tells us to be vigilant with our hearts and thoughts. Though 2 Corinthians 10:5 is addressed to the church community, this principle could also apply to us as members of that community. We can't and shouldn't entertain every thought. Instead, we are to take them captive. We should guard our thoughts the way a security officer checks and restricts entry into a building. The security officer's job is to make sure that only those who should enter do and that rules are followed (e.g., proper identification or attire). If not, entry is restricted. Likewise, we should examine our thoughts and determine if they are aligned with God's truth. Only then do we entertain them. When and how are you most unguarded with your thoughts? How have you learned to *destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*?

2 | Deliberately think about what is good.

*⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. **PHILIPPIANS 4:8–9***

Just as prevention is better than cure, governing our heart and filling it with God's truth is better than merely detecting ungodly thoughts and emotions. It's like receiving a vaccine rather than having to treat the disease. Sometimes we try to deal with our runaway thoughts and emotions without getting to the root of the problem. The truth is, our thoughts and emotions respond to what our minds are filled with. If we keep on allowing negative ideas to enter our hearts unfiltered, we will naturally respond with negative thoughts and emotions. On the other hand, deliberately and frequently filling our minds with the truth of God's word will bear good fruit. As a result of thinking of everything good, our hearts can rest in God's promise: *the God of peace will be with you*. What kind of thoughts do you normally gravitate to? How do you deliberately fill your heart with God's truth?

APPLICATION

- If your heart were visible to others, what do you think they would see? How can you guard your thoughts better and align them with God's word this week?
- In what area of your life do you have a hard time governing your heart? How is this only possible through Christ, and what is your prayer for this area of your life? How can you deliberately think about what is good every day?
- Beyond your church community, who can you encourage and inspire to govern their hearts this week? What do you think you will say? How can you lead them to trust God and His word?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His instructions through His word. Acknowledge your need for Him in your heart and life. Commit to filling your heart with the truth of His word every day.
- Pray that your life and thoughts would be aligned with God's word. Ask Him for His grace and power for you to deliberately think about what is good.
- Pray for wisdom and courage to declare God's truth to others and help them follow Jesus.

4 Governing Our Tongues

WARM-UP

- Do you consider yourself active on social media? Why or why not?
- What's one thing you are passionate about and share freely with others?
- Recall a time you said something carelessly and hurt a loved one. What happened?

WORD *³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **JAMES 3:3-8***

(Read also **JAMES 3:9-12**.)

In this passage, James, a leader of the first-century church in Jerusalem and a biological half-brother of Jesus, talks about how important it is for believers to tame their tongues. *Tongue* here isn't just a body part; it also means what we communicate—spoken or written, face-to-face or online. The words we use can negatively affect the entire course of our lives. How many problems in the world do you think were triggered by a careless

word? Wars, strife, and division began from what people have said. This is not just true historically; we see it happening online all the time. James concludes that *no human being can tame the tongue*. Left to ourselves, we would even hypocritically use our tongues for both good and evil. Taming the tongue is only possible when one is under God’s governance. Today, we will look at how we can govern our tongues with God’s power.

1 | Let your speech be guided and governed by God.

¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control . . . **GALATIANS 5:15-16, 22-23**

Paul warned the members of the Galatian church against using their words to hurt one another. But he knew that people by their own power can’t fully control their sinful tendencies. Because of this, he didn’t simply tell them to stop. He told them to *walk by the Spirit*, meaning to live life led by the Spirit of God. Rather than uselessly focusing on taming our tongues, we should focus on abiding in our relationship with God through faith in Christ. As we do so, God’s Spirit will work in and transform us. Our lives—including our speech—will be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. When our words are full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, how can we advance God’s kingdom and disciple a nation?

Fill your heart with the knowledge of God and godly thoughts.

³⁴“ . . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

³⁵The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.”

MATTHEW 12:34-35

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. **PROVERBS 4:23**

In Matthew 12, Jesus revealed that the Pharisees' accusations against Him exposed who they really were. There's a solid principle here: Who we really are in our hearts comes out in our words. Out of what's in our hearts, we speak. This can even be seen in our interests, hobbies, and passions. As mentioned, we need to check what fuels our hearts and guard what enters it. If we allow evil thoughts and ideas to enter our hearts unfiltered, these will come out. But if we meditate on God's will and word, good, godly, and life-giving words will flow from us. What is King David's prayer in Psalm 19:14?

Dedicate your tongue to build others up and communicate grace.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. **EPHESIANS 4:29**

If we're not careful, we can use our tongues for both good and bad purposes. But if our tongues are dedicated to God, they are instruments to be used solely for His purpose—to build people up and speak grace. We dedicate our tongues to God continuously and deliberately so He may be honored in everything we say. What is *corrupting talk* and what do you think this will cause? How have your words communicated *grace to those who hear*?

APPLICATION

- How would you describe or evaluate the words that come out of your mouth or that you share online? Why do you think the tongue is so difficult to tame? What are you willing to do differently starting today to govern your tongue?
- How can the gospel and God's goodness in your life be evident to others around you? What are some ways you can declare the gospel through your life and tongue?
- Think of four people you can encourage this week. How will you speak life to them? What will you tell them?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His word that teaches us the power of our words and speech. Dedicate your tongue to God, and ask Him for wisdom and a divine ability to govern yourself every day under Him.
- Pray that your words would reflect God and cause people to know Him. Lift up specific situations or relationships in which you have a hard time restraining your tongue. Ask God for strength and self-control.
- Pray for healing over a relationship that may have been scarred by hurtful words. Pray to forgive and ask God for reconciliation and peace.

5 Governing Our Bodies

WARM-UP

- Think about one thing people do to take care of their bodies that you can't relate to. Why do you think they do it? Why wouldn't you?
- Growing up, what was one thing you had a hard time sharing and wanted to keep to yourself? Why?
- What's one thing about yourself that you wish you could change? Why?

WORD ²⁵*Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* ²⁶*So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.* ²⁷*But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.* **1 CORINTHIANS 9:25-27**

In this passage, Paul compares himself to an athlete, who *exercises self-control in all things*, especially his body, in order to win a prize. However, Paul was going for an imperishable reward. This is not to gain salvation, which we receive by grace through faith. The reward Paul aimed for is available to all believers when we come before Christ's Judgment Seat one day. It will be given for what believers did on earth to serve others, preach the gospel, advance God's kingdom, and make disciples. To get this eternal prize, Paul said that he disciplines his body and keeps it under control.

Many Christians are derailed from advancing God's kingdom and living out His purposes because they find it hard to discipline their bodies. Some believers fall into the trap of sexual immorality or addiction. Others fail to take care of their bodies and suffer the consequences of weakness, sickness, or even early death. Although God is powerful, gracious, and able to redeem our

failures, the way we govern our own bodies has a large effect on what we can do for His kingdom. Governing our bodies can't simply be done through willpower—it can only be done by encountering the truth of what Christ has done for us. In this lesson, we will look at three truths about our bodies that will empower and motivate us to govern ourselves well to advance God's kingdom and disciple a nation.

1 | Our bodies are members of Christ's body.

¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. **1 CORINTHIANS 6:15-17**

Imagine yourself as one of Jesus' disciples during biblical times. Could you imagine taking His hand and using it to slap another person? Would you invite Jesus into a brothel? Of course not. As His disciple, the thought would probably never even cross your mind. Why? Because this is Jesus—the Son of God Himself!

Imagine that your hands and mouth are the hands and mouth of Jesus. What would you do with them now? This is what Paul says in the passage: Our bodies are members (body parts) of Christ. We are not just His people; we are parts of His body. Just like an arm and a leg belong to a body, we belong to Him. We have already been united to Christ through faith in Him. Because we are part of Him, when we lay our hands on the sick, it is as if Christ Himself is laying His hands on them. When we preach the gospel, it is as if Christ

Himself is speaking love, grace, and truth. How has knowing this changed the way you view, treat, and use your body?

2 | Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19

Most people, upon entering old church buildings, feel a sense of awe and wonder. Because of this reverence, making noise or acting inappropriately there seems to be out of the question. In the Old Testament, God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle for His people to worship Him and offer their sacrifices. Many years later, God's people built a temple where His glory could dwell. While ordinary people could enter its outer and inner courts, it had a Holy Place reserved for priests, and a Most Holy Place where God's presence was manifested. The Most Holy Place was so holy that only the High Priest could enter it to offer sacrifices for sin, and only once a year. When the priests entered the *temple* (referring to the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place), there was much awe, reverence, and holy fear among all. Today, because God lives in you, your body is the equivalent of both the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Since God's Spirit dwells in you permanently, with how much reverence and awe should you treat your body? Would you deliberately use it for sin?

3 | Our bodies belong to Christ.

¹⁹*You are not your own,* ²⁰*for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19–20**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **ROMANS 12:1**

We can exercise our rights over the things we own. However, as believers, our body is not something we own. We were destined for destruction because of sin, and Jesus redeemed us with His own blood. He endured pain, humiliation, rejection, suffering, and death for our salvation. As a result, our whole selves belong to Him. In Romans 12:1, *spiritual worship* means giving God worship that is true, proper, appropriate, and reasonable. In light of Christ's sacrifice, why do you think presenting your body to God as *a living sacrifice* is appropriate and reasonable?

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APPLICATION

- How will you respond to the truth that God owns your body and it is the temple of the Holy Spirit? What is one thing you will do differently to govern your body well?
- This week, take time to reflect on 1 Corinthians 6:19–20. Commit to respond to this passage and apply it in your life.
- How can you, with everything you have and are, advance God's kingdom and tell people about the gospel?

PRAYER

- Thank God for making you a member of Christ's body and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Commit to govern your body the way God wants you to.
- Pray that your life, body, and actions would reflect Christ. Pray that God alone would be glorified.
- Pray that the members of Christ's body—the Church—would continue to preach the gospel and advance God's kingdom.

6 Governing Our Time

WARM-UP

- If you had more time, what would you like to do?
- What's one thing you want to be remembered for? Why?
- Who is the most punctual person you know? Compared to him or her, are you punctual?

WORD *¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* **EPHESIANS 5:15-17**

To be effective in advancing God's kingdom and discipling a nation, we need to submit every area of our lives to God's governance. This includes our time, which is a precious commodity. Unlike money, time is a non-renewable resource and can't be regained once it is lost. Every day, we have an opportunity to deliberately govern our time and place it under God's rule. If we don't manage our time, other people and circumstances will control it and dictate what fills our calendars. The apostle Paul exhorts God's people to be wise in managing time and *making the best use* of it. Today, we will look at three realizations from the Bible about our time and how we can govern it well.

1 | Life is short.

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. **PSALM 90:12**

Moses prayed to God to teach His people to live wisely. The Good News Translation of this verse is: *Teach us how short our life is, so that we may become wise.* When we realize our resources are limited, we learn to truly value what we have. Wasting clean water is easy until we realize it can run out and have to conserve it. Wanting to bring everything on a trip is convenient until we realize we have limited space and have to choose what we really need. We can take time for granted until we realize how limited our time on earth is, and we don't even know how much of it we actually have. We will have to prioritize what really matters. How do you think understanding the truth that life is short will change the way people make decisions?

2 | God has a proper time for everything.

¹For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven . . . ¹¹He has made everything beautiful in its time.

ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 11

(Read also **ECCLESIASTES 3:2-10**.)

Scripture says that God has a proper time for everything. He has plans for us and a corresponding timetable. Sometimes we feel like we don't have enough time to do what He's telling us to, including growing in our relationship with Him. That may mean we are doing too much—things He has not asked us to do or has set for another time. The truth is, we can't do

everything right away or simultaneously. Timing is important. If we don't realize this, we may experience discouragement or even burnout. How are you learning to figure out God's proper timing for your life?

3 | God and His kingdom should be the priority.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." **MATTHEW 6:33**

What is truly important? What should we prioritize and devote our time to? While there are many important things in life, Jesus tells us to *seek first* God's kingdom and righteousness. If we do that, all other things will fall into place. The most important in God's kingdom is the King Himself. Since our right standing with God (or righteousness) comes through faith in Christ, our relationship with Him must be our main priority. Seeking His kingdom also involves seeking to advance His kingdom agenda in our lives, family, and nation. When God's kingdom comes first in our lives, what does He promise? What do *all these things* refer to (Matthew 6:25–31)?

APPLICATION

- Think about how you have been governing your time. What are one or two things you will start doing to make the best use of the time God has given you?
- In a practical way, what does prioritizing God and His kingdom look like for you?
- What is your prayer for your life and the time God has given you? In which relationship or area of your life do you realize that life is short? What will you do about it?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His sovereign hand upon your life. Thank Him for every year, day, and minute He has ordained for you.
- Ask God for wisdom and grace to make the best use of your time. Pray that you would understand what the Lord's will is for you, your family, your community, and your nation.
- Pray for God's kingdom to advance in your nation. Pray for God's will and purpose to prevail, according to His timing.

7 Governing Our Money

WARM-UP

- If you could double your regular allowance, paycheck, or source of income, what would you do with the extra money? Why?
- How do you decide if you will buy something you want? Take us through your decision-making process.
- Who is the most extravagant person you know? How does he or she spend money?

WORD ¹⁹*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . . ²⁴No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. . . . ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* **MATTHEW 6:19–21, 24, 33**

(Read also **MATTHEW 6:25–32**.)

Aside from governing our thoughts, hearts, bodies, and time under God, we need to learn to govern our money. *Money* here is not just bills or coins; it includes all the resources we have of material value—property, investments, and even our jobs or careers. Money plays such an important part in our daily lives that Ecclesiastes 10:19 says *money answers everything*. We need money for our daily necessities, education, and work. We also need it in order to advance God’s kingdom in the nations. Perhaps no material thing is as connected to all the different aspects of our

lives as money. That's why it is a major area which we need to govern under God. In this lesson, we will look at what Jesus says about money and how it should be viewed and put to use.

1 | We cannot love and serve both God and money.

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” **MATTHEW 6:24**

Jesus said that we can't serve both God and money. We either serve God and use our money in service of His kingdom, or we prioritize money over God. By saying this, Jesus is emphasizing that those who love and serve God need to govern their money in order to place it under His rule. Money can be God's rival when it comes to our devotion, trust, and hope. Loving money and living for it is dangerous. Money itself isn't evil; loving it is. The apostle Paul said that *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils* and even causes believers to turn away from their faith and experience many pains (1 Timothy 6:10). This doesn't mean we shouldn't have money or build wealth. Rather, money is a tool and has a purpose. It shouldn't govern us. Instead, we should govern it and place it under God's rule. How have you seen this verse to be true in life?

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2 | Our money is meant for God's kingdom purpose.

¹⁹"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

MATTHEW 6:19-21

We need to have a new kingdom perspective regarding money. It is not meant for the accumulation of wealth and resources. Yes, it can be used to meet our needs. However, it is meant to be used to store *treasures in heaven*. This means using it for the purposes of bringing people into the kingdom of heaven. (See also Luke 16:9.) People are God's treasure and inheritance, and His desire is for people to be saved and be part of His kingdom. One way that we can use our finances for God's purposes and glory is by faithfully giving the tithe (the first ten percent) or firstfruits of our income to God. However, using our money for God's kingdom purpose goes beyond the tithe (Proverbs 3:9). We are to seek Him and look to His word for wisdom on how to manage the rest. The Bible has much to say about saving, investing, and borrowing money, as well as providing for our families, managing our finances, and passing on an inheritance to our children. When we manage our money according to God's word, it can be used and maximized to effectively bring more people into His heavenly kingdom. According to Jesus, how secure are our earthly treasures? What about our treasures in heaven?

We do not have to worry about our material needs as we seek first God's kingdom.

³¹"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

MATTHEW 6:31-33

When people hear that our money is to be used for God's kingdom and His glory, a common response is, "What about my needs?" Jesus tells us that we should not be anxious about our material needs. This does not mean that we should not think about them. It means that we should not worry too much about them. Why? Because God already knows our needs and is concerned about them. He also promises that as we *seek first* His kingdom and righteousness, all these things will be added to us as well. This truth frees us from the love of money and its control over our lives. When we realize that God knows our needs and wants to meet them, we will no longer make decisions based on our desire for money. Rather, we will be empowered to manage our finances and put them in the service of God. What does Proverbs 3:9-10 say about those who honor the Lord with their wealth?

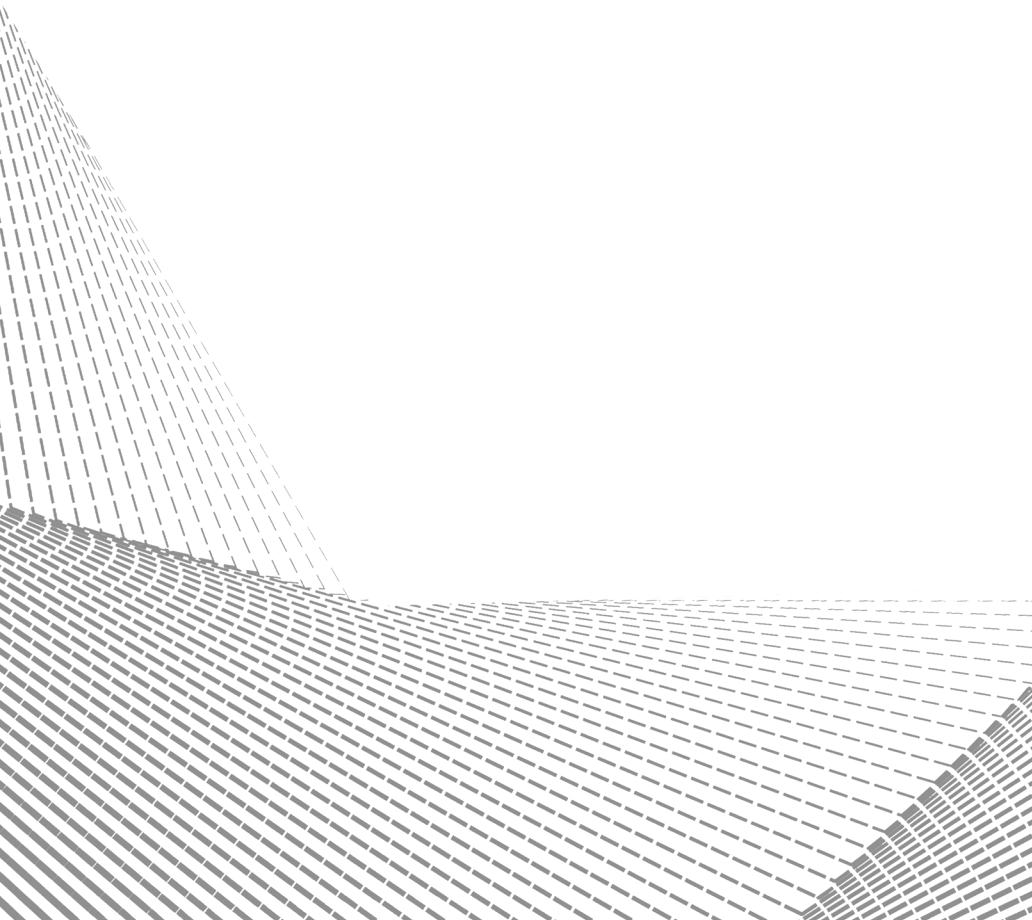
APPLICATION

- How can you honor the Lord and serve His kingdom purpose with your money? What did you learn today and how will this affect the way you spend, save, and give?
- Do you consider yourself a good steward of the resources God has given you? How can you use what you have to advance His kingdom?
- How do you think you can contribute to national and societal transformation? Is there a need you can meet in your community or an endeavor you can be part of? Spend some time this week seeking God and answering these questions.

PRAYER

- Thank God for His blessings and provision in your life. Pray that your heart would be aligned to His, and that He would be honored through your life and wealth.
- Dedicate all that you have to God. Trust Him for His abundant provision and grace for you and your family. Pray that as you seek God's kingdom, all these things will be added to you as well.
- Ask God for wisdom and creative ideas to build wealth, be a channel of His blessings, and contribute to national transformation. Pray that you would sow into the kingdom of God cheerfully and generously, and that God's kingdom would continue to advance in your nation.

Family Government



8 The Purpose of Family

WARM-UP

- Who was there for you in your family when you were growing up? What stories do your parents or guardians tell about your birth?
- What is one thing your family or clan is known for? What would you say is a characteristic or classic trait of your family?
- What is one thing you are grateful for about your family? Why?

WORD ²⁷*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*
²⁸*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* **GENESIS 1:27-28**

The family is known as the basic unit of society, and there is much truth and biblical support for this. In the beginning, God gave Adam and Eve (the first husband and wife) His mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and take dominion over all the earth. Society and all nations began through this family. Even today, families are the building blocks of a nation and play an essential role in it. The erosion of the family leads to the erosion of society. If we are to disciple a nation, we need to disciple families and teach them about God's design and purpose for the family. Based on this passage, we will look at why God designed family.

Families are meant to reflect God and help people know Him.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **GENESIS 1:27**

God made man in His image. This refers to His attributes, not His visual appearance. As God's image-bearers, human beings are intended to reflect His image both individually and corporately. This can be experienced most in the context of a family.

God is a triune being, three persons in one: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is relational in nature and even uses terms like "Father" and "Son" to reveal who He is. We first begin to experience, understand, and reflect God to others in healthy, godly, loving relationships within a family. However, many relationships even in our families are broken or dysfunctional because of sin. As a result, our image of God may be distorted, and we may have difficulty relating with and trusting Him, as well as reflecting His goodness to society and the world.

The good news is that God's grace can overcome our past and bring restoration to individuals and families. As we are disciples, we experience God's healing and transformation more and more. Because of this, our lives and families increasingly reflect God to those around us and to the rest of society. What kind of family did you grow up in? What truth about God did you learn or experience by being part of your family?

2 Families are meant to nurture people and help them flourish and perpetuate.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it . . .” **GENESIS 1:28**

God intended the human race to continue through the family. This is not just about reproduction, though. If it were, people could do this by having sex apart from marriage and the family. God wants humanity to both multiply **and** be fruitful, which means growing, thriving, and being productive. To do this, God originally designed the family to meet our physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual needs. As a result, each family member can flourish and become who God wants them to be, equipped to thrive in life and advance His kingdom in their sphere of society. How have we distorted God’s command to *be fruitful and multiply*? How can this be redeemed?

3 Families are meant to be one of God’s means of filling the earth with the goodness of His kingdom.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” **GENESIS 1:28**

Aside from being fruitful and multiplying, God commanded man to *fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion*. Through families, God intended mankind to perpetuate His rule and reign on the earth, so that life on earth would be an expression of His benevolent kingdom. This is where we first learn about government, authority, teamwork, relationships,

and justice. It's also where we learn about character, humility, service, self-sacrifice, and love. Why are families a crucial part of discipling a nation? What is the value of helping children know and follow God from a young age?

APPLICATION

- Why do you think God has placed you in your family? How is He redeeming your family and accomplishing His purpose through you?
- What is the role of family in discipling a nation? Why are families so important, and how do you want to grow in your understanding of family government?
- Think of one or two friends whose family situation is especially challenging. How can you pray for and encourage them this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for your family. In spite of sin, brokenness, and dysfunctions, pray that your family would fulfill its purpose and reflect God's goodness to the world.
- Pray that you would fulfill your role in your family well (e.g., as a father, mother, child). Ask God for wisdom, grace, and patience to do this.
- Pray that God would redeem families in your community. Pray for healing, transformation, and peace in families and society.

9 The Role of a Husband

WARM-UP

- Do you consider yourself to be an organized person? In which aspect of your life is this seen the most?
- Think of one of the husbands in your extended family or community who sets a positive example for marriage. What do you like most about how he relates with his wife?
- What is one loving but painful thing someone has done for you? How did you respond?

WORD ²²*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*
²³*For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*

EPHESIANS 5:22-23

God established a government structure and appointed roles and responsibilities in the family so there would be order and clarity in the home. When this structure is in place, the family becomes stronger and follows God's original design in society. Today, we will study the God-given role of husbands and fathers in a family. Our fallen world has imperfect families that are far from the ideal. For many reasons, not all families have a husband or father present, and with God's grace, they have to adjust to fill those roles. Though our families are imperfect, we can grow into God's divine design as we encounter His grace and kingdom. He alone can transform families to reflect His original design.

1 | God designed the husband to be the head of the family.

*²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. **EPHESIANS 5:22-23***

There needs to be a clear leader in the family; otherwise, there would be chaos. A husband and a wife don't always agree on every decision. For things to move forward, someone needs to make the final call. Instead of each family figuring out who the head should be, God clearly established that the husband is the head of the family. He is responsible for making the final decisions. If each family could decide who its head should be, what do you think would happen?

2 | God designed the husband to be under the headship of Christ.

*But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. **1 CORINTHIANS 11:3***

Since man is fallen and imperfect, in order to lead his family correctly according to God's ways, he must first be under the headship of Christ. All authority ultimately belongs to God and all instituted human authority is merely delegated (Romans 13:1). This includes the family. When the man has a relationship with God and seeks to know and obey Him and all His ways, he can truly lead his family as God called him to. In your community and nation, what would it look like if

more heads of households were being disciplined and leading according to God's character and ways?

3 | God intended the husband to lead his family with the motivation of love and service.

*²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **EPHESIANS 5:25-27***

Under the headship of Christ, the husband should follow Christ's example of leadership. Jesus does not lead for His own advantage. He is not selfish or self-serving; He leads by serving others out of love for them. As the head of the Church, He demonstrated His love by sacrificing His own life for us. His goal is to perfect the Church.

In the same way, God did not appoint the husband to be the head of the home to lord it over the family or have his own way. God intended man to lead his household with the motivation of love for his wife and children and the goal of pursuing what is best for them, according to God's word. This also entails that the husband knows how his wife and children are doing, listens to what they have to say, and takes them into consideration when making decisions. This kind of selfless and loving leadership can only be lived out when he has first experienced Christ's selfless love and servant leadership.

When family members experience this kind of leadership at home, they are more prepared to lead in different areas of society. In Matthew 20:25–28, what did Jesus say about leadership in His kingdom?

4 | God intended that the husband lead, making his wife and children a priority.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” **EPHESIANS 5:31**

After God, a man’s wife and children are to be his priority. This is God’s design. The husband is the leader of his family. Neither his parents nor his boss are the main considerations when making decisions. God comes first, then his wife and children. If men fail to recognize this truth, this could cause problems in family government and, consequently, in society. This blurs the God-ordained government structure in the home and causes relational strain. However, when this truth is practiced, it will result in greater stability within the family and, consequently, in society. This truth is so important that it’s mentioned four times in the Bible: Genesis 2:24 by Moses; Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7–8 by Jesus; and Ephesians 5:31 by Paul. What do you think a marriage would look like if this truth were not applied and a man did not *leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife*?

APPLICATION

- What did you learn from today's lesson, and how will you apply this in your life?
- What is the value of leadership in the home? How do you think your family will grow stronger in light of this? What is your prayer for your family?
- How did Jesus exemplify leadership motivated by love and service? What are you willing to do to demonstrate the same love and service in your home?

PRAYER

- Thank God for instituting family and giving each person a role to play in the home. Pray that through the families in your church, God's love would permeate your community and nation.
- Pray that your understanding of a family would be based on God's word. Ask God for your heart and mind to align with His, in spite of past experiences or challenges in your family.
- Pray that the head of your family and household would lead according to God's ways. Declare God's blessing of wisdom, courage, and strength over the head of your household.

This lesson describes God's original design. If your family situation does not reflect this, we encourage you to seek help and godly counsel in your church community.

10 The Role of a Wife

WARM-UP

- What comes to your mind when you hear the word “wife”? Why?
- Who is the strongest woman you know? Recall an instance explaining this.
- How do you show a person respect? What do you do or say?

WORD *Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”*

GENESIS 2:18

(Read also **EPHESIANS 5:22-23**.)

The Bible describes the woman as *a helper fit* (in the ESV) or *comparable* (in the NKJV) to the man. In the original language, this is literally “one who stands in front of” a man, meaning the man and woman are a match, much like a pair of shoes or slippers. They are not exactly the same (there is a left shoe and a right shoe), but they are equals. In the same way, women are equal to men in intrinsic value, even though they are not exactly alike. However, when it comes to family governance, though a husband and wife are of equal value, God established a government structure in the home. He appointed roles and responsibilities in the family so that there would be order and clarity in the home. When this is in place, the family becomes stronger and plays its God-given role in society.

Today, we will look at God’s design for the role of a wife in the family governmental structure. In the same way that not every family has a father or husband, a wife or mother may not always be present. In such cases, the family has to adjust and God’s grace is sufficient to fill the gaps. There is also no such thing as a perfect wife or mother, so we will be looking at God’s original

design. When people encounter Jesus, put their faith in Him, and come under His kingship, God will transform their families as He intended.

1 | God's design is for the wife to help her husband accomplish God's purposes.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." GENESIS 2:18

The word *helper* in Genesis 2:18 does not mean an "assistant," where the wife simply assists the man, who plays a major role. *Helper* appears in the Bible twenty-one times:

- Sixteen times, it refers to God being the rescuer of His people.
- Twice, it refers to people who are rescuers.
- Once, it means people who are very essential in accomplishing what needs to be done.
- And twice, it is used to describe the woman or wife.

Clearly, God has gifted the woman with strength. In God's family government structure, He has called the wife to help her husband accomplish God's purpose for their family. Especially where her husband is weak or not gifted, she can extend her strength. She can also help support and rescue him during hardship or trouble. How does Proverbs 31:10–31 describe *an excellent wife*? What do you think this would look like in today's times?

God's design is for the wife to submit to her husband.

*²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. **EPHESIANS 5:22-23***

Another role of the wife is to submit to the headship of her husband. This does not mean that she has no voice or say. As mentioned, the wife is to extend her gifts, voice, wisdom, and insight in helping her husband seek God for direction for their family. If there is a disagreement on the direction, she is to follow her husband's final decision, while trusting God on the matter. However, if the husband's decision is sinful, she is under no obligation to obey him. Ultimately, all authority belongs to the Lord and the man's headship at home is merely delegated authority. What does Acts 5:29 say about obedience to earthly authorities that go against God's commands?

Submitting to authority is usually a challenge for us. However, relying on God's grace and trusting in His providence and wisdom empower us to do so.

3 | God's desire is for the wife to respect her husband.

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. **EPHESIANS 5:33**

Submission is not all about obedience. It is firstly an attitude of respect to the one who is in authority. A wife could yield to every decision of her husband and yet be disrespectful and rebellious. This is not the biblical idea of submission to authority. As the wife submits to her husband *in everything* (Ephesians 5:24), there must always be humility and respect. If her husband asks her to sin, she can remain humble and respectful as she refuses to follow him. What does 1 Peter 3:1–2 say about how the wife's respectful attitude and conduct could affect her husband who does not obey God's word? How can this motivate and empower her to show respect? In what ways could a godly wife's attitude of respect and submission make an impact on advancing God's kingdom and discipling a nation?

APPLICATION

- What is the role of a wife in a family and home? What did you learn from our lesson today? How will you apply this in your life?
- Growing up, what was the traditional or cultural perspective you had of wives? How do you think your mindset needs to be aligned with God's word?
- Ask God to reveal to you one married couple you can pray for this week. How can you pray for them?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His word that guides us into all truth. Pray that your understanding of the roles of a husband and wife would be based on the Bible, not your culture or upbringing.
- Pray for the wives in your extended family and church community to reflect God's design for marriage. Pray that through their faith and example, the message of the gospel would reach many others.
- Pray for strong marriages in your Victory group and church community that will reflect God's love and purpose in our society and nation.

This lesson describes God's original design. If your family situation does not reflect this, we encourage you to seek help and godly counsel in your church community.

11 The Role of Parents

WARM-UP

- What is one of your earliest childhood memories? How old were you, and what do you remember about it?
- Growing up, whose family did you spend a lot of time with? What did you like most about this family? Why?
- Do you like playing with children? What do you like most about them?

WORD *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

EPHESIANS 6:4

If we are to disciple the nation, parents must know the role God designed for them and be equipped to disciple their children. This is because, as we know, the future of our nation belongs to our children and the generations to come. The family serves as the basic building block of society, the training ground and launching pad for the next generation. As parents are disciplined and disciple their children, they are working toward discipling the nation.

Today, we will look at another aspect of family government under God: parenting. Being a parent is a noble and challenging calling. The truth is, none of us were raised by ideal parents. Many of us did not have godly role models and were not brought up according to God's ways. However, God can bring people into our lives, especially from our church community, who can teach us God's ways and serve as role models. Furthermore, the Bible describes God as having both paternal and maternal roles. When we experience Him as our perfect parent, we can be healed and transformed to become the parents or future parents He desires for us. Here is the role of a parent according to God's design.

1 | Godly parents teach their children to love God.

⁴"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children . . ." **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7**

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. **EPHESIANS 6:4**

One of the primary roles of parents is to disciple their children by teaching them about God and His ways so that they would love, trust, and obey Him. In Deuteronomy 6:7–9, God goes to great lengths to describe how to do this. The Old Testament shows positive and even nation-transforming results of discipling children and the consequences of failure to do so. Wisdom books like Proverbs contain exhortations and practical wisdom on teaching children. This is echoed in the Gospel accounts and epistles in the New Testament. To love God is the greatest commandment and the basis of all God's other commands for faith and life. With this foundation firmly established, children will be equipped to fulfill their God-given purpose in society. What is diligence? Why do you think God commanded parents to teach their children diligently?

Godly parents train their children and prepare them for life.

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. **PROVERBS 22:6**

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. **PSALM 127:4**

King Solomon uses the illustration of arrows to describe one's children. A warrior shapes and maintains the arrow, then carefully and deliberately aims it to hit its intended mark. Preparing and aiming the arrow is critical, because once released, the warrior no longer has control over it. In the same way, godly parents recognize the limited time they have to directly influence their children and train them in the way they should go. This doesn't just include practical skills and knowledge for the real world; it's also about teaching them to rely on God, hear from Him, and live out His purpose for their lives. While many think that the goal is to shift children from dependence to independence, the goal should be to shift their dependence from their parents to God. When children are dependent on God, they will be guided even when they are older. How did your parents or guardians prepare you for life?

Godly parents provide for the material needs of their children.

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 TIMOTHY 5:8

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children . . .
PROVERBS 13:22

Aside from providing for children's spiritual needs, God's design is for parents to provide for their physical and material needs. This includes food, shelter, clothing, and whatever they need to survive and thrive. Furthermore, the Bible exhorts parents to do their best in providing an inheritance for their children and even grandchildren. This will serve as a springboard that will help children accomplish their God-given purpose and advance His kingdom even beyond their parents' lifetimes. Do you think an inheritance is limited to the physical and financial? What spiritual inheritance can you leave for the next generation?

APPLICATION

- Based on this lesson, what is the role of parents? How will you apply what we've learned today in your life?
- What inheritance do you want to leave for the next generation? What's one thing you are willing to do to prepare them for life?
- Think of a parent who could use some encouragement in raising his or her children. Commit to pray for this person and the family every day this week. Ask God how you can encourage him or her.

PRAYER

- Thank God for the parents or guardians He gave you. Thank Him for His sovereign will over your life, how you were raised, and how He led you to know Him.
- Pray for the parents in your extended family to disciple their children and do their part in discipling the nation. Ask God to give them wisdom, grace, and blessings as they lead their children in His ways.
- Pray for family relationships you know of that need healing and restoration. Pray that God would turn the hearts of the fathers to their children (Malachi 4:6).

This lesson describes God's original design. If your family situation does not reflect this, we encourage you to seek help and godly counsel in your church community.

12 Training Children

WARM-UP

- Have you ever tried to learn a new sport or hobby? What was it like?
- Growing up, who did you look up to the most? Why?
- What were you usually corrected or disciplined for as a child? Recall an instance explaining this.

WORD *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* **PROVERBS 22:6**

⁴"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

(Read also **DEUTERONOMY 6:1-3.**)

Some humanistic thought on parenting involves limiting the governance and guidance a parent provides, especially in the areas of faith and gender. This radical approach leaves children to discover things on their own and decide for themselves. However, there is no such thing as children training themselves. If parents don't train them, teachers, friends, and social media will. Without guidance, children won't be equipped to discern right from wrong.

On the other hand, the Bible teaches that parents should be deliberately and purposefully involved in training their children. Again, children are like arrows that should be prepared, shaped, and aimed to hit their God-given mark (Psalm 127:4). When more and more children are disciplined according to God's design, we can have a flourishing, prosperous, and godly nation. Today, we will look at God's original design when it comes to governing and training children.

1 | **Parents train their children by living and modeling what they are to teach.**

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-6**

Before God told the Israelites to teach their children to know and love Him, He first told them that His ways and words should be on their hearts. For God's people, faith should be real in the lives of parents, and then in children. Parents can demonstrate this by living out what they say. Based on 1 Corinthians 11:1, how intentional should you be in modeling your faith in Christ to others?

Parents train their children through diligent and regular instruction.

"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

DEUTERONOMY 6:7

Aside from demonstrating their faith, parents are to diligently train their children through instruction. This can be done in set times when the family is sitting down together. Instruction can also happen spontaneously, as opportunities arise. Mealtime, walking, doing household chores, and playtime can all be moments to teach children about God and His ways. What is the value of using different opportunities or moments to teach children about God? How do you think this will help children know and love God more?

Parents train their children by creating an environment that reminds them of God and His instructions.

⁸"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." **DEUTERONOMY 6:8-9**

As parents grow in their relationship with God and model their faith to their children, they also provide an environment where their children will know and love God. This can be done through objects, symbols, and traditions. A Bible visible and readily accessible for reading, framed Scripture passages, and godly music and media can fill the home. Parents can also help their children know God through family devotions, prayer before meals and bedtime, and Christmas traditions. As these seeds are planted and grow, children can create their own environments as they pursue God's purpose for their lives. What traditions or activities do you want to do in your family or future family to help the next generation know and love God?

4 Parents train their children by properly administering discipline.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. **EPHESIANS 6:4**

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. **COLOSSIANS 3:21**

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. **PROVERBS 29:15**

Should parents use corporal punishment in disciplining their children? Or should they only use words? There is much debate about this. However, both methods can be administered in ways that wound a child emotionally and psychologically, and may even leave lasting scars. Proverbs 29:15 says that both corporal and verbal discipline can be useful in training children. The real issue is how it is administered. If discipline is administered harshly or incorrectly, this will provoke a child to anger and result in bitterness and discouragement. The Bible teaches that discipline should be administered out of love and in a way that respects the child's dignity. It should result in hope and encouragement that comes from the gospel, and should help the child know God better. How might parents discourage their children or cause them to become bitter when administering discipline? How can they encourage hope and empower their children to change instead? How does the truth contained in Hebrews 12:5–6 help us have the proper attitude toward discipline?

APPLICATION

- Growing up, how did you perceive or understand the role of your parents or guardians? How does this need to be aligned with God's word? How will you apply what we've learned today in your life?
- What is the role of parenting in discipling a nation? How can you be a godly influence to the next generation and create an environment that brings them closer to God?
- Do you know of a child who is having a hard time in his or her home environment? How can you pray for the child this week? What do you think you can do to help him or her love and trust God?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His word that is our source of wisdom and insight. Pray that you would look to God's word for instruction and strength every day.
- Pray for parents in your community to model God to their children, instruct them in His ways, create an environment that points them to God, and administer discipline lovingly.
- Pray for the hearts of the next generation to be tender towards God, their family, and their community. Speak a blessing over our children and the generations to come. Declare that they will fulfill their God-given purpose and destiny.

This lesson describes God's original design. If your family situation does not reflect this, we encourage you to seek help and godly counsel in your church community.

13 The Role of Children

WARM-UP

- What's your best or fondest childhood memory? Tell us what happened.
- Tell us about the youngest person in your family. What does he or she like to do or say?
- When you hear the word "kid," what comes to mind? How would you explain what a kid or child is supposed to do?

WORD *¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³"that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."*

EPHESIANS 6:1-3

Parents aren't the only ones who have a vital role to play in the government structure established by God. Children do, too. All of us—including our children, those we are discipling, and ourselves—are far from the ideal. But as God continues to work in our lives and as we yield to His work, we will grow and become the children He desires us to be. Here's what the Bible says about God's design for children in the family.

1 Children submit to and obey their parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

EPHESIANS 6:1

God's design is for children to submit to the headship of their parents. This means listening to and obeying their parents' godly instruction and responding to discipline with an attitude of humility and eagerness to learn. Again, this does not include obeying parents if they instruct their

children to sin. When children grow up and get married, they are no longer under the headship of their parents. However, it is good for them to heed and live out the godly instruction their parents gave them when they were young. How are the things your parents taught you still apparent in your life today?

2 | Children honor their parents.

²“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” **EPHESIANS 6:2-3**

To *honor* is to show a person how valuable he or she is to you, both to that person and others. While children’s obedience to their parents may depend on the circumstances, honoring and respecting parents is not optional. The Bible says that this benefits both the children and their parents: It will go well with them and they will enjoy long lives. Many modern studies affirm that negative emotions like bitterness and resentment shorten one’s life, while positive emotions help improve the quality of life and prolong it. As we enjoy the benefits of this promise, we can be better instruments of God in discipling our nation. How do you honor your parents? What’s one thing you’ve done or said lately to them or about them?

Children help when their parents are no longer able to take care of themselves.

But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

1 TIMOTHY 5:4

As parents age, they can get sick or be unable to fend for themselves. The Bible reveals that God is concerned for the weak and helpless. Therefore, God's design for the family includes children and grandchildren caring for the elderly who are unable to care for themselves and provide for their own needs. This pleases God.

In ancient times, widows and orphans had to fend for themselves, resulting in prostitution, slavery, and even death. History shows that Christians were the first to care for the elderly, widows, and orphans corporately and institutionally in the church and beyond. This resulted in such social transformation that unbelieving rulers took note of this and historians wrote about their acts of kindness. The way Christians treated the elderly, widows, and orphans is one key reason for the rapid spread of the gospel in the Roman Empire. If we were to take this Christian responsibility seriously, what do you think the result would be in our communities today? How could it usher in social and national transformation?

APPLICATION

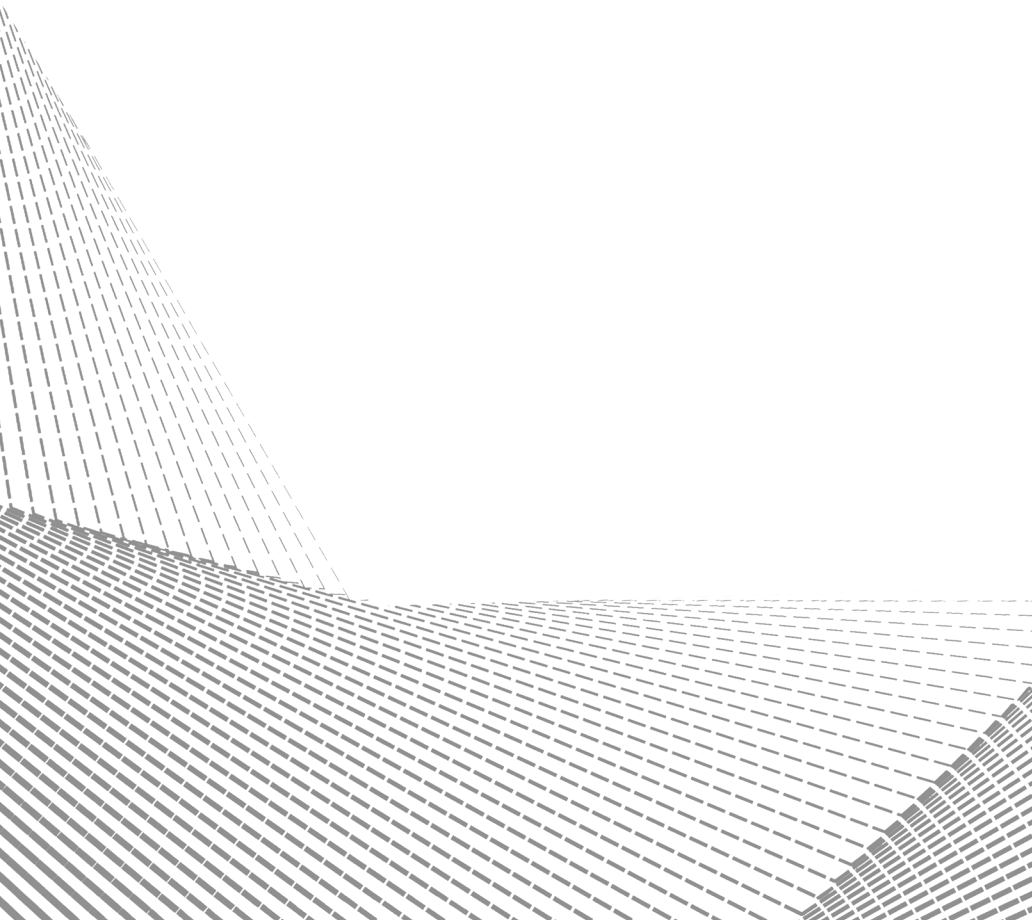
- How do you think you can honor your parents or guardians in your stage in life? How can you encourage a culture of honor, respect, and love in your home, extended family, and community?
- What is the value of raising children in a godly home? How can you do your part in discipling the next generation and our nation?
- What part can you play in caring for the elderly, widows, and orphans? Take some time this week to reflect on James 1:27. Ask God for wisdom and ideas to put your faith into action.

PRAYER

- Thank God for bringing you into His kingdom and for giving you His word to guide your path. Pray that you would honor your parents or those who raised you. Ask God for wisdom, patience, and joy to serve, respect, and love them.
- Pray for families in your community and nation to follow God's ways. Pray for children to be raised in godly homes and make a difference in society.
- Pray for the elderly, widows, and orphans in your community and nation. Pray that your church community would demonstrate the gospel to them and declare God's love.

This lesson describes God's original design. If your family situation does not reflect this, we encourage you to seek help and godly counsel in your church community.

Church Government



14 What Is the Church?

WARM-UP

- What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “church”? Why?
- What is one person or topic you would like to understand more? What baffles you about this?
- Who is the geekiest person you know? What topics does he or she talk to you about?

WORD *⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

1 PETER 2:9-10

For many Christians, understanding the theology of the Church doesn't seem that important. Even if church is a regular part of our lives, there is much to learn about it. The Church:

- is the people of God, not a building
- is both local and universal
- is both visible and invisible
- is called out in order to be sent out
- gathers in order to scatter
- is an organism more than an organization

As it relates to the Trinity, the Church is called the people of God, the body of Christ, and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

There are many ways to describe the Church, and each one reveals how the Church lies at the center of God's eternal purposes. This means that the Church is not a divine afterthought or an accident of history. It is important because Christ founded it (Matthew 16:18), purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and intimately identifies Himself with it (Acts 9:4).

Matthew 16:18 is the first place in the New Testament where the word translated as "church" is used. It came from the compound Greek word *ekklesia*: *ek* means "out"; *kaleo* means "to call." Taken together, *ekklesia* means a group of people called out and assembled for a specific purpose.

Ekklesia was normally used to refer to political assemblies in Athens. In the New Testament, it has a more sacred application, referring to those whom God has called out of sin into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, and who have become *fellow citizens* with God's people (Ephesians 2:19). This word is also applied to people who physically gather to worship and serve the Lord.

The Church is a reflection of the character of God. The Nicene Creed of AD 381 affirms that Christians believe in the one, holy, universal, and apostolic Church as a reflection of God's unity, holiness, immensity, eternality, and truthfulness. In this lesson, we will look more closely into the attributes of the Church.

1 | The Church is one.

⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. EPHESIANS 4:4-6

Because God is one, the Church is one and is to be one. Unity is a major attribute of the Church and a sign for the world, reflecting the unity of the triune God.

This unity is not always visible at the organizational level. Local churches obviously have different styles, methods, and structures. Unity refers to the spiritual reality consisting of the fellowship of all true believers sharing in the same baptism, partaking of the same supper, and looking forward to sharing one heavenly city. This is why divisions and quarrels are not supposed to be normal in the church. How important is it for *one body* to work together? What happens when it doesn't?

2 | The Church is holy.

*²⁵. . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **EPHESIANS 5:25-27***

Because God is holy, the Church is holy and is to be holy. This doesn't mean that the Church has attained ethically perfect holiness right now. God is still in the process of smoothing out the wrinkles and spots of His people. The holiness of the Church is the result of Christ's holiness and the progressive work of the Holy Spirit. The Church is holy because God has set it apart from the world for His service. According to this passage, how did Christ make the Church holy?

3 | The Church is universal.

"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation . . ."

REVELATION 5:9

The Church is universal in that it stretches across space and time. In both the Old and New Testaments, God is called the "Lord of all the earth" and "King of the Ages." Although the universality of the Church is not explicitly spelled out in the New Testament, the scenes of the future detailed in the book of Revelation show that the Church is composed of people from all tribes, languages, peoples, and nations. While we are all part of different local churches, we belong to the universal Church. Why is it important for believers to understand this?

4 | The Church is apostolic.

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone . . . **EPHESIANS 2:19-20**

Because the Church is founded on and is faithful to the word of God given through the apostles, the Church is apostolic and is to be apostolic. The word "apostolic" is important. It comes from "apostle," a messenger or one who is sent, and refers to at least two things: apostolic message and apostolic mission. First, the Church must remain faithful to the gospel message Jesus entrusted to the apostles, that they in turn

gave us through the Holy Scriptures (John 17:20; 2 Timothy 2:1–2). Second, the Church must always send out people to reach those who do not yet know Jesus (Acts 1:8). Why is it important that the Church both gathers and scatters?

APPLICATION

- Why do you think we should grow in our understanding of the Church? How does your perspective need to be aligned with God's word?
- Of the attributes of the Church, which caught your attention the most? What did you learn and how will you apply it in your life?
- What is the role of the Church as it relates to the rest of the world? What do you think the Church should do? As part of the Church, what are you willing to do?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the Church. Thank God for placing you in a local church.
- Pray for those in your church community. Speak a blessing over them.
- Pray for those in your household or group of friends who are not yet part of the Church. Pray that they would know Christ and fulfill His purpose for their lives.

15 The Purpose of the Church

WARM-UP

- Do you like speaking in public? Why or why not?
- Which group of friends do you rely on regularly? What brings you together?
- Are you musically inclined? Tell us what type of music you like.

WORD *"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* **MATTHEW 16:18**

What is the purpose of the Church? The Church exists to worship God, make disciples, preach the gospel, and be socially responsible.

1 | Worship God.

³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. ¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **ROMANS 11:36–12:1**

The one grand purpose of the Church, the reason the Church meets together in the first place, is for the glory of God. As believers, we worship God by offering our whole selves as living sacrifices to Him. But worship is not restricted to worship services. It is about glorifying God in every single

thing we do. How does this play out in your own life outside the worship service?

2 | Make disciples.

¹⁹“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:19-20

Jesus commanded His disciples to *go and make disciples*. This means helping others to know and follow Jesus. Before sending them out, the church is to nurture believers and build them up to maturity in the faith. Like the disciples, as people come to know Christ, they grow in their faith and in turn tell others about Him. The goal is not just for people to come to the saving knowledge of Christ. It is to *present everyone mature in Christ* (Colossians 1:28). Why is nurturing and equipping believers important in order for us to disciple all nations?

3 | Preach the gospel.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **ROMANS 1:16**

When the people of God have been discipled and nurtured, they in turn make the gospel of Christ known to others. This evangelistic work is our primary ministry to the world. We are called to preach the gospel with boldness and urgency. How do you think Paul came to a point where he was *not ashamed of the gospel*? How did you learn to preach the gospel confidently?

4 | Be socially responsible.

¹⁷But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. **1 JOHN 3:17-18**

Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. **GALATIANS 2:10**

The Church is called to be socially responsible. While the New Testament emphasis is on meeting the material needs of those who are part of the church (Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 8:4), we are to help and serve unbelievers so that they may come to know Christ. This means caring for the poor and needy in the name of the Lord. Even if they do not respond with gratitude or choose to receive Christ into their hearts, we are supposed to minister God's love

to them. According to 1 John 3:18, how are we supposed to love others?

Which of the four is most important? Since all these are commanded by God in Scripture, we must do them. If we only focus on one or two, we neglect some elements that are crucial to the life of the church. If, for example, we overemphasize worship, we might have a church full of people who are highly spiritual but don't know how to love their neighbors. If we overemphasize preaching the gospel, we might not be able to help believers mature in their faith. If we overemphasize social responsibility, we might lose sight of the spiritual nature of our ministry.

APPLICATION

- Are you a disciple of Christ? How can you grow in your faith and relationship with God every day?
- What is the purpose of the Church? How does this relate to you? What is your role as a part of the Church?
- Are you making disciples? Who can you help follow Jesus? What can you do differently starting this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the opportunity to worship Him as a church every week. Pray that you would honor Him every day.
- Pray that the Church would fulfill its purpose in Christ. Pray for your local church to grow and continue to make disciples.
- Pray that your local church would be socially responsible and reach the world.

16 The Role of Church Leaders

WARM-UP

- What do you do to stay focused on a task? Recall an instance explaining this.
- Recall a school play or activity you were given a special role in. What happened?
- In your experience, what are people's expectations of a leader?

WORD *And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. **ACTS 14:23***

⁸Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." . . . ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . .

EPHESIANS 4:8, 11–12

God has designed that every local church should be led or governed by spiritual leaders, particularly pastors. The New Testament uses several terms to refer to them, such as "elders," "shepherds," and "overseers." Paul says in Ephesians that these leaders are *gifts* Christ gave to people, not just to the church. This is probably because when church leaders perform their God-ordained roles well, the church and all of society are blessed.

However, many people have a misunderstanding of church leaders' roles. Many call these leaders "ministers," believing that doing the work of the ministry is mainly a pastor's job. In reality, these responsibilities belong to every member of the church: preaching the gospel, praying for people, helping others follow Jesus, visiting the sick, and meeting members' needs. So when

pastors do not meet these perceived expectations, it can result in disillusionment and disappointment in the church. And when pastors try to live up to roles that God has not planned for them, it can lead to burnout. Today, we will look at what the Bible says about the God-given role of pastors.

1 | Pastors are to lead and oversee the church.

*¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **1 PETER 5:1-3***

*²⁸"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." **ACTS 20:28-30***

Pastors and church leaders are called to take care of God's flock, the church, by leading it and overseeing all the affairs concerning it. They are called by God to know the church's condition, oversee the care and growth of the members, and lead and direct the flock towards its God-given purpose. This also involves diligently watching for dangers that could harm church members, such as teachers of false doctrines and others who could take advantage of the members for selfish gain. Overseeing the church does not mean that the pastors and church leaders have to do everything, but that they make sure everything gets done. Because the Church is so precious to God and Jesus purchased it with His own blood,

these all should be done with careful diligence. How have you seen the pastors in your church lead and oversee?

2 | Pastors are to devote themselves to prayer.

²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. . . . ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." **ACTS 6:2, 4**

Since Jesus is the true head of the Church, pastors and church leaders should devote themselves to prayer. It is in prayer that they are spiritually nourished to do what God has called them to do. They also receive God's guidance through prayer. If Jesus, the Son of God Himself, devoted time to prayer, how much more should human beings commune with God? How do you think prayer will strengthen pastors and church leaders to oversee the church and disciple the nations?

Pastors are to devote themselves to study, preach, and teach God's word.

²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. . . . ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." **ACTS 6:2, 4**

. . . preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. **2 TIMOTHY 4:2**

The Bible is God's word in written form and is useful for all matters of faith and practice. This is how God primarily communicates with His people. Therefore, pastors and church leaders should devote their time to study, preach, and teach God's word. If the church is to be strong and healthy enough to disciple a nation, feeding the flock is of utmost importance. The accurate preaching and teaching of God's word provides spiritual nourishment and guidance to the church. This will help members grow and mature, serve in society, and be who God has called them to be. How have pastors and church leaders helped you grow in your understanding and appreciation of God's word?

4 | Pastors are to equip church members to minister.

¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . . **EPHESIANS 4:11-12**

The Church is the body of Christ. Imagine what a human body would look like if a majority of its parts were not functional. This is a picture of the Church when only the pastors are viewed as ministers. Pastors are to *equip* church members to do *the work of ministry*, not do every work of ministry themselves. They are not the star players of a team; they are playing coaches—in the game while directing the team. When pastors focus on equipping church members and the members stop relying on pastors to do all the work of ministry, the church is built up. They will be equipped to minister to one another and advance God's kingdom in every sphere of society. How have the pastors in your local church equipped you to do the work of ministry? How is this still ongoing?

APPLICATION

- How would you explain the role of pastors and leaders in the Church to someone who isn't part of it yet? What did you learn from today's lesson and how do you think this applies to your life?
- What mindset or belief do you have of pastors and church leaders that needs to be aligned with God's word? What does the Bible say about it?
- Do you have a relative or friend who may have turned away from God because of the church? What can you do for this person this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His word that guides us. Thank Him also for the spiritual leaders He has appointed in your church.
- Pray for your pastors and leaders. Pray that they would lead with wisdom and humility, devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Speak a blessing over their families and households.
- Pray for the church to be equipped to minister and advance God's kingdom. Ask God for boldness and strength to continue the work of ministry in your sphere of society.

17 Church Governmental Authority

WARM-UP

- What comes to mind when you think of a “servant”? Why?
- What is something you are very particular about? Recall an instance explaining this.
- In your area of expertise (in your profession, homemaking, or even school), who is the most qualified? What qualifies him or her?

WORD *“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”* **ACTS 20:28**

God values the Church so much that He appointed leaders and gave them governmental oversight to care for the Church. However, because of the lack of understanding of some about the nature and extent of the authority given to spiritual leaders, there have been misuses and abuses. Some have made use of worldly principles of authority instead of God-ordained ones. This has tainted the image of the Church in some areas of society, which in turn has been a hindrance in fulfilling Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations. In this lesson, we will examine some biblical truths about the authority given to church leaders. When these truths are properly understood and applied, the Church will be strong and steadfast in fulfilling its mission, and church members will learn to use these same principles in their spheres of society.

1 | Church governmental authority is instituted by God.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **COLOSSIANS 1:18**

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” **ACTS 20:28**

All authority ultimately belongs to God. Because He instituted church leaders and delegated authority to them, pastors and church leaders oversee churches as an extension of God’s authority. Pastors and church leaders are not the true heads of the church; Christ is. Therefore, the pastoral office should be respected by both the pastors and members. Their leadership and authority are not absolute and are limited to the extent that they reflect Christ’s will and ways. Church members are not obligated to follow when their church leaders tell them to do things contrary to God’s word. When pastors preach and teach according to God’s word, their words carry the authority of Christ—as if Christ Himself were saying these words. If the pastors’ words reflect God’s word, how should we respond?

2 | Church governmental authority should be conferred only upon those qualified.

¹*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.* ²*Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,* ³*not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover*

of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

The Bible says that aspiring to serve as an overseer or pastor of the church is *noble*. However, such governmental authority should only be conferred upon those who meet the God-given character, maturity, and relational qualifications. They must also have a proven track record in managing their own families well before they can care for God's church. These qualifications have even more weight than their qualification of being *able to teach*. Based on the passage above, why do you think this is so? Since no one is perfect and completely Christlike, what does it mean for an overseer to be *above reproach*?

3 Church governmental authority is intended for serving others and building them up.

For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down. **2 CORINTHIANS 13:10**

¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion,

but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **1 PETER 5:1-3**

The purpose of church governmental authority as indicated in these passages helps us determine its limits. It is to be used for building up, not tearing down or shameful personal gain. However, the use of this authority is not always pleasant. Paul wrote about the possibility of his *severe* use of authority to discipline certain church members (2 Corinthians 13:10). Even when authority is used for discipline, it should be *for building up and not for tearing down*. Recall an instance when your pastors or church leaders sacrificed their time or resources to serve you. Share of a time when you were corrected but also built up in the process.

4

Church governmental authority is to be exercised through leading by example.

⁴²And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

MARK 10:42-45

The admonition of the apostles Paul and Peter in 2 Corinthians 13:10 and 1 Peter 5:1-3 reflects Jesus’ teaching in Mark 10. When James and John were seeking positions of authority in God’s kingdom, Jesus contrasted how ungodly leaders use their position and power to compel others

to obey them. He calls this “lording it over” people. In His kingdom, this is not how things work. Those who lead should serve and set a godly example. Jesus demonstrated this through His life and sacrificial death. He gave His own life to serve others, instead of seeking to be served. In the same way, church leaders today are to lead by example. They should not use their titles or positions of authority to compel others to follow their leadership. How is this exemplified in 1 Corinthians 11:1?

APPLICATION

- How did this lesson help you understand church governmental authority? How do you think this will affect your life? In what area do you need to think differently and adjust?
- How does church governmental authority apply in your local church setting? What is one thing you can do this week to understand it better?
- What is your response to the church leaders God has placed in your life and community? How can you apply what you learned?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the authority He instituted for His people. Thank Him for the leaders in your local church.
- Pray for church leaders to remain faithful to God's call in their lives and live above reproach. Pray for them to serve and lead by example.
- Pray for more pastors and leaders who will also be raised to uphold the highest standards of integrity.

18 Responding to Church Leadership

WARM-UP

- Recall a recent disagreement you had with a friend. What happened?
- When celebrating birthdays or special occasions, what is a tradition you have with family members or friends? How do you show the person you value him or her?
- How do you know you trust a person? Recall an instance explaining this.

WORD *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

HEBREWS 13:17

For church leaders to fulfill their roles well, church members should know how to respond to them and the authority of their office. When church leaders exercise this God-given authority well and church members respond according to God's design, the church will be healthy and effective. As a result, the church will fulfill God's purpose of advancing His kingdom through discipleship in every sphere of society. Today, we will look at how God calls church members to respond to those who hold the pastoral office.

1 | God calls us to obey and submit to them.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. HEBREWS 13:17

Because God has delegated authority to church leaders to watch over the church, we are to submit to them and follow their lead. Responding this way will also allow leaders to serve God's people and carry out this challenging task *with joy*. However, like all delegated authority, there are limitations. A pastor or church leader should not make decisions for church members. They are to preach and teach God's word with clarity and authority, but church members are responsible to apply these truths to their own lives. For example, pastors teach God's view of marriage, but do not dictate whom to marry. They teach God's view of finances, but do not determine which investments to make. Furthermore, if what they say is contrary to God's word and leads others to sin, church members are not to blindly follow them. According to the passage, what is the role of a church leader?

2 | God calls us to respect and honor them.

¹²We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. **1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13**

¹⁷Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

¹⁸For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

1 TIMOTHY 5:17-18

The apostle Paul urged the Thessalonian believers to respect those overseeing them. This respect is based on God's appointment of church leaders, not their talents, education, or age. He also wrote to Timothy, the head overseer of the church in Ephesus, that those who preach and teach are *worthy of double honor*. By this, he meant that they deserve to receive decent or good *wages* for their work in the Lord. How can we respect and honor our church leaders?

3 | God calls us to imitate their faith.

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. **HEBREWS 13:7**

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. **1 CORINTHIANS 11:1**

Since those in church governmental authority are to lead by example, members of the church are to give careful attention to their way of life. Church leaders, like everyone else, have flaws and weaknesses. That's why we are to *imitate their faith*, not everything they do. We are to observe their faith in God in different situations and seasons of their lives, and imitate them as they pursue Christ. What does it mean to imitate someone? What does it mean to imitate someone's faith?

4 | God calls us to trust them.

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. **1 TIMOTHY 5:19**

Church members extend trust to their leaders by refusing to entertain baseless accusations against them. Bringing accusations against believers is one of Satan's oldest tricks in the book, and leaders are not exempt from this. In fact, they are the enemy's primary targets. That's why, by default, we are to give church leaders the benefit of the doubt and trust them—unless there is sufficient basis of error or wrongdoing. If what they did merits correction, this is best brought up with them directly or with other church leaders who can help bring correction and restoration. In any case,

whether there is a false accusation or a behavior proven wrong, gossip is not constructive and will only cause disunity in the body. How do you show your trust? How can you apply this as you relate with church leaders?

5 | God calls us to pray for them.

Brothers, pray for us. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:25

Church members often ask their pastors to pray for them. However, pastors and church leaders need prayer, too. At times, they feel tired, frustrated, and lonely. They also experience fear and anxiety, challenges, lack, and moments of weakness in their faith. They carry the weight of serving God's people and equipping them to advance His kingdom through discipleship. Therefore, one of the most practical things we can do for our pastors and church leaders is to pray for them regularly. How do you pray for your pastors and church leaders?

APPLICATION

- Of the different ways we can respond to church leadership, which one stood out to you? Why? How does your understanding of church governmental authority need to be aligned with God's word?
- What's one thing you can do to show respect and honor to your church leaders?
- How can you pray for your church leaders? Who can you commit to pray for and how often will you do this?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the leaders He has given your church community.
- Pray for them to love God and others with all their hearts. Pray for their families and ministry.
- Pray that you would respond to God-given authority with love, joy, and peace.

19 Responsibilities of Church Members

WARM-UP

- Choose one person in this group. Without telling us his or her name, describe the person to us.
- What do you think makes a person difficult to love?
- Have you ever thought of what you would like written on your epitaph? What would you like people to know you for? Why?

WORD *This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. **EPHESIANS 3:6***

Is being a member of a local church important? If the church is open to all, what is the value of membership? What are the distinguishing marks of church members?

Membership is a thoroughly biblical concept. Just as families, tribes, and our bodies have members (Romans 6), so does the Church. The apostle Paul wrote that the moment Gentiles believe the gospel of Christ, they become *members of the same body* of Christ. In God's great plan, His people are distinct and set apart from others. The Bible emphasizes the distinction between those who trust God and those who don't.

The truth is, our responsibilities as church members are borne from our responsibilities as Christians. We are to love and worship God, be baptized in water, participate in communion, hear and obey God's word, and share life together. In this lesson, we will look at the responsibilities we have to God, one another, our church community, and the world.

1 | We have a responsibility to God.

... it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. PHILIPPIANS 1:20

As members of the body of Christ, the grand obligation of our lives is ultimately the glory of God. Everything else flows from this, and no duty or responsibility is more important. The chief motivation of all we do inside and outside the church is God's honor and glory. How is this grand obligation evident in your daily decisions and actions?

2 | We have a responsibility to one another.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

JOHN 13:34

Christianity is a community matter, and Christian life can only be fully realized in relationship with others. The New Testament has at least fifty-nine commands about relating with *one another*, such as bear with one another (Colossians 3:13), honor one another (Romans 12:10), and carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). We cannot obey any of these in isolation; they are done in the context of relationships within the local church. As Christians, we have

a responsibility to carry out these “one another” commands. Why should we do this, even when it is difficult?

3 | We have a responsibility to our church community.

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. **ROMANS 14:19**

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **EPHESIANS 4:1-6**

Church members are obliged to pursue *peace* and *unity* within their congregation. Strife and divisiveness should be actively avoided for the sake of God’s honor and our Christian witness. Because Christians share the same Spirit and mind, unity must be a natural expression of that Spirit. How have you learned to pursue peace and unity in your local church?

4 | We have a responsibility to the world.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." **ACTS 1:8**

The Church has a responsibility to the world. We have mentioned how, first and foremost, church members are to make disciples, preach the gospel, and serve the poor, the marginalized, and the disadvantaged. But the Church does more than these. Our responsibility to the world includes being:

- the salt that preserves the world from corruption
- a city on a hill that throws light onto our darkened society
- the collective conscience of a nation
- God's hands and feet to the downtrodden
- the prophetic voice that thunders against injustice and evil

How does the Holy Spirit empower us to fulfill our responsibilities as Christians and be Christ's witness to the world?

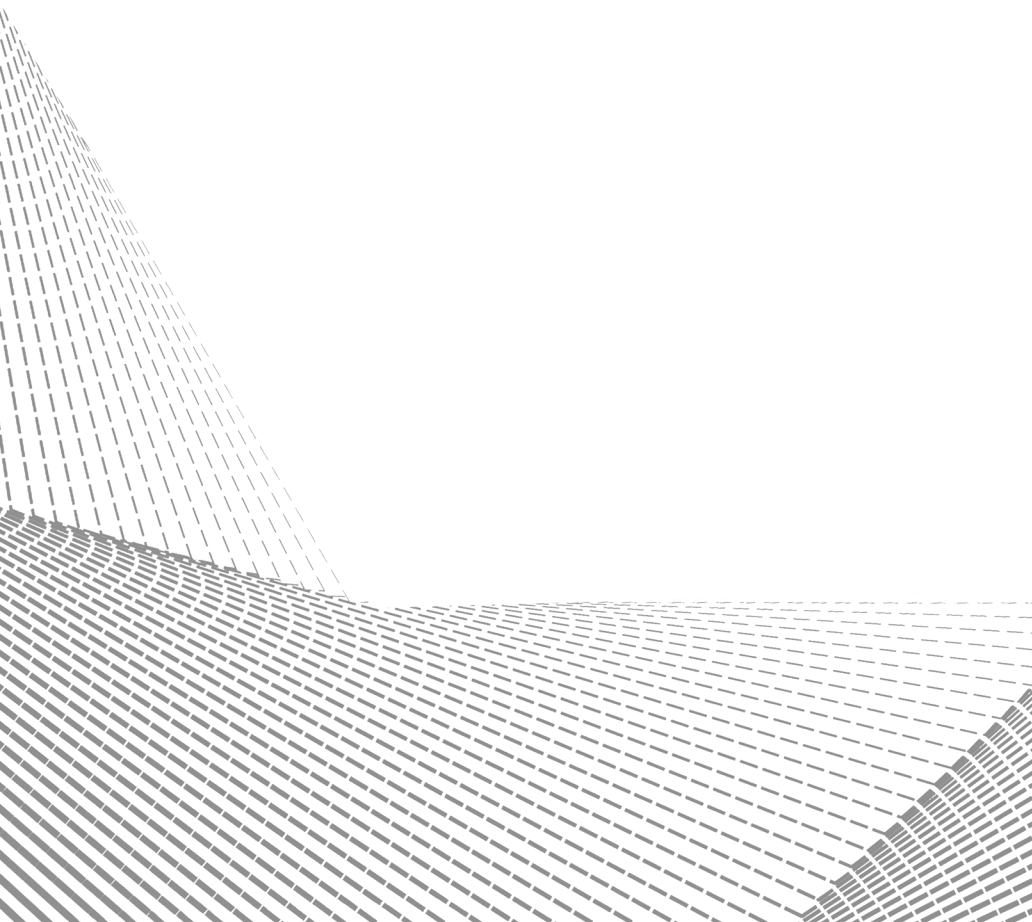
APPLICATION

- How can you honor and worship God through what you do at home, at work, and in your community?
- Recall a difficult time in your life. Who helped you get through it? How can you be available for someone else this week?
- What is your profession and how do you think this helps in fulfilling the church's responsibility to the world? How can you help people know God through what you do?

PRAYER

- Thank God for your church community. Pray for your church to be strong in faith, hope, and love.
- Pray that the Church would fulfill its responsibility to God, one another, and the world.
- Pray that the Church would be God's hands and feet to the downtrodden. Pray for the gospel to be preached in every nation.

Civil Government



20 In the Beginning, Politics

WARM-UP

- What is one thing you were always told to do growing up? Why?
- Tell us the plot of your favorite movie. Why do you like it?
- What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word "politics"? Why?

WORD *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

GENESIS 1:1

In the beginning, politics.

To some people, that sentence sounds almost heretical. The phrase "in the beginning" has always been heavily associated with the biblical creation story; the word "politics," on the other hand, belongs to the contentious, dog-eat-dog realm of human power plays. These two concepts don't go together; they shouldn't belong in the same sentence. Or so we think.

When we ask the question "What does the Bible say about politics?" most Christians jump to a few choice verses in the New Testament and build their theology from there. But if we do that, our perspective will be fragmented and incoherent. Instead of picking and choosing our favorite verses, it is helpful to ask what the Bible says as a whole about politics.

The concepts of governance and politics are actually embedded in the creation story itself. As the Bible's main storyline unfolds, we get to see the full picture of politics and governance that reflects God's good structural design for the world. One way to tell that story is to divide the biblical narrative into four acts—Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. In this lesson, we will learn about politics as part of God's good creation.

In Act One, God created a good world and made human beings to reflect His goodness as they live in His good world. Adam and Eve flourished in the Garden of Eden. Their world was characterized by unbroken justice and universal peace.

As Lord over all creation and ruler of the whole earth, God gave Adam and Eve a set of divine instructions for the ordering of the world.

1 | A Moral Mandate

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but 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**

God wanted Adam and Eve to rely upon Him for knowledge of good and evil. They were not to determine for themselves what they might call good and evil, moral or immoral, right or wrong. That prerogative belongs to God alone. How do you think the world would be different if Adam and Eve had listened to and obeyed God?

2 | A Social Mandate

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” **GENESIS 1:28**

God mandated Adam and Eve to build strong families, communities, and, by implication, societies. From the beginning, God instituted marriage and family and wanted human beings to flourish in direct relationship with Himself.

Since God's original design included and valued marriage and family, how are we supposed to live in light of this?

3 | A Cultural Mandate

*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it . . ." **GENESIS 1:28***

The "filling of the earth" refers to the spreading out of human families to different parts of the land. "Subduing" refers to the tilling of the soil, the working of the ground, and taking from God's created world and making something out of it. This is a command to bring out the hidden potential of the world. How have you learned to value work and fulfill this cultural mandate?

4 | A Regal Mandate

*". . . and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." **GENESIS 1:28***

God mandated Adam and Eve to rule over the animal kingdom. To "rule" here means that humans are to promote the well-being of animals and protect them. This is not a license to abuse and kill, but a mandate to preserve and

protect. Based on this passage, what was the scope of mankind's dominion?

All of these combined form God's mandate for Adam and Eve to build a human society that:

- is in close relationship with God (a blessing to *be fruitful and multiply*),
- goes far and wide to work the ground and build culture (*fill the earth and subdue it*), and
- is in a benevolent relationship with the rest of the created order (*have dominion over* the animal kingdom).

Politics, defined as the theory and practice of governing a society, is deeply embedded and heavily implied in these mandates. "Politics" is derived from the Greek words for citizen (*politēs*) and city (*polis*). Though the Bible doesn't use the term explicitly, the mandate to build society, govern it, and put order into it has been there from the very start.

Had this world remained untainted by sin, it would have blossomed into a society of people who loved God and each other. Humankind would have developed art, science, education, sports, business, and politics in justice and peace. There would be no wars, no world hunger, no dirty politics, no leadership scandals. The political realm might have just involved leaders deciding relatively simple things together, such as whether to drive on the left or right side of the road, or when to start the academic year. Sadly, Act Two—the Fall—happened, and that idyllic world quickly unravelled.

APPLICATION

- If politics is part of God's good creation, why do many people today think it is a necessary evil? What did you learn today, and how will you apply it in your life?
- God created humans to work the earth. What does this say about our jobs and businesses?
- The regal mandate tells us that we are stewards of God's creation, not mere users. How does this affect your identity and the way you view yourself?

PRAYER

- Thank God for making the world the way He did. Pray that you will have a biblical understanding of every aspect of the world.
- Pray that God's design for our society would be followed. Ask Him for wisdom for our leaders and order in our land.
- Pray for God's grace to obey the commands He gave you. Pray for His strength to do your part in building our society and nation.

21 A Broken World

WARM-UP

- Do you like following instructions? Why or why not?
- How do you respond when things don't go according to plan? Recall an instance explaining this.
- Tell us about a recent argument or fight you had with a loved one. What happened?

WORD *⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

GENESIS 3:6-7

(Read also **GENESIS 3-4.**)

We are looking at the biblical narrative as four acts: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. In Act Two, the Fall, the idyllic story goes bad. Adam and Eve refused to trust God for knowledge of good and evil. In an act of total defiance to God, they sought to determine “the good” on their own. Their disobedience has far-reaching consequences. Man died, first spiritually and later physically, and along with him, so many good things in creation were broken. Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God’s moral mandate led to the corruption of human life, society, culture, and the environment. In this lesson, we will look at four relationships that were broken because of the Fall.

1 | Man's Relationship with God

And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." **GENESIS 3:10**

Man was created in close relationship with God. This relationship is seen in many ways in Genesis alone. We were created in His image and mandated to act as vice-regents and reflectors of His glory all over the earth. We are God's image-bearers.

When man rebelled against God, our ability to bear His image was shattered. We fell into sin; we lost the glory of God; we were separated; we died. Something very fundamental to our humanity broke. How did Adam react when God looked for him, and how is this characteristic of us as well?

2 | Man's Relationship with Fellow Men

¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." **GENESIS 3:11-12**

Right after the breaking of our relationship with God was the breaking of our relationship with fellow men. Human relationships turned out to be the second casualty of the Fall. This is why Adam's first impulse was to blame Eve when God confronted him, and the first crime in the Bible is a murder between brothers (Genesis 4:8).

This also eventually played out in society. In Genesis 4:23–24, we see how Lamech killed a man for wounding him. He even called seventy-sevenfold revenge on the person who would kill him. From warring families and tribes to battles between nations, we see how the Fall created an avalanche of broken human relationships that is evident until today. How is this true in the relationships around you?

3 | Man's Inner Self

⁹But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" **GENESIS 3:9–11**

In their pre-Fall state, Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25). After the Fall, they began to look inward and noticed their own nakedness. Something shifted. God was no longer their source of authority and identity. The wide, wondrous world in front of them shrunk until it was only about the self. Today, we overestimate our importance while we relegate God to the sidelines. What are some ways you have seen this happen?

4 | Man's Relationship with Nature

¹⁷And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." **GENESIS 3:17-19**

Adam and Eve being kicked out of the Garden of Eden was one of the most dramatic consequences of the Fall (Genesis 3:24). Nature used to provide for their needs. After the Fall, they needed to work the soil and toil harder for the ground to yield fruit. Nature was no longer as friendly or yielding to their needs.

Moreover, in Genesis 6-8, God's punishment came through a great flood. Nature had become an instrument of punishment. And in Genesis 9:2, God planted fear and dread of humans among the members of the animal kingdom. As a result, we no longer enjoy companionship and affinity with most animals. Their impulse now is to run away from us.

It is in the context of this breaking of fundamental relationships that we ask, “So what happened to the mandates God gave humanity?”

While the world God created remains structurally good (it remains in good order and still allows human flourishing), it is now directionally corrupt. This means that we take what God has given us, such as the commands in Genesis 1:28, and twist them toward wrong ends:

- The mandate to be *fruitful and multiply* was distorted and caused issues of overpopulation, abortion, and the breaking of families.
- The mandate to *fill the earth and subdue it* turned into war, colonization, and military takeovers.
- The mandate to *have dominion* and benevolently rule over the animal kingdom became an exploitation of natural resources.

This explains why contemporary politics has become contentious and toxic. God’s design for the ordering and governing of society remains good, but our sin and spiritual corruption poisoned it. Instead of viewing civil government as a place for us to wisely steward resources and public trust, we grasp for power and trample on the weak. But the problem runs deeper than most political analysts and theorists ever conceived.

Some think that the problem is politics or political parties and ideologies. Others think it’s the systems and forms of government. But these things are the symptoms, not the root cause. Politicians are not the problem. Party lists are not the problem. Activists are not the problem. We are. We all are—because sin has corrupted our hearts and we all have this twisted tendency to turn God’s good creation into idolatry.

This is precisely why the solution to the brokenness of the world doesn’t start with politics. It starts with redemption that is revealed in Christ.

APPLICATION

- We are inherently sinful and selfish. How will this awareness cause you to appreciate God's original design and His plan for our redemption?
- How do you think God wants you to respond to the broken relationships around you?
- How would you respond to people who dismiss politics as something inherently bad?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His original design and purpose for our world. Thank Him for the Scriptures that shed light into this original design and reveal how we can be saved.
- In a world of broken relationships, ask God to make you a minister of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).
- Pray that your understanding of God and the world would be based on Scripture and filled with hope in His redemption.

22 Why Civil Government?

WARM-UP

- To whom do you go for advice for something beyond your expertise? Why do you consider him or her an expert?
- Have you ever held a leadership position in school? What do you recall about it?
- Who is one person you would follow without question? Why?

WORD *¹Let 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. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For 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, ⁴for 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. ROMANS 13:1-4*

The results of the Fall in Genesis 3 cannot be overstated. Humanity is now predisposed to wrongdoing and sin. In Genesis 4–6 alone, we see that humankind's fall from grace went on to produce a society of violence, murder, and abuse. Genesis 6:5 says that *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth . . . every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*

Three chapters later, in Genesis 9:5–6, right after the flood, God spoke to Noah and commanded him to carry out the most severe punishment (the death penalty) for the most horrible crime (murder). At this point, there was no mention of civil government yet—humanity had just restarted after the great flood. But the

point God made was instructive: Because the human heart is predisposed to sin and wrongdoing, a system of governance had to be instituted. The anarchy of Judges 18–25 shows in gruesome detail why civil government is needed to restrain evil and execute justice. This explains the need for the government to *bear the sword* (Romans 13:4).

There are many truths to draw from this text, but for the purpose of our discussion, we will focus on these three:

1 | God alone holds absolute authority.

*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. **ROMANS 13:1***

The first thing that we need to understand about authority is that there’s no other entity in all of creation that holds absolute power over us except God Himself. Everything else is derivative. Only God deserves our absolute allegiance and loyalty. Why is it important to understand and believe this truth?

2 | All other authorities on earth are derived from God.

For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ROMANS 13:1

The second thing we need to understand about authority is that if it is not God's, then it is derivative and secondary. This means that someone above, that is, God Himself, is holding political leaders accountable. No matter what kind of government or regime you are under, that regime will pass and only the authority of God continues forever. This also means that there really is a place for civil authority in the grand scheme of things. Governments are part of the structural good that God designed for the world. How has history shown that governments and regimes don't last? How should we respond in light of this?

3 | Civil government exists to exercise justice.

³For 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, ⁴for 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. ROMANS 13:3-4

The role and purpose of government is to exercise justice. Justice, in this case, means to give each person that which is his due. This can be expressed in two ways: promoting good and punishing evil. A government promotes good for the sake of its marginalized citizens by establishing an ordered and peaceful social space where good is recognized

and encouraged. But since we live in a fallen world, this is also where evil is punished and judgment is carried out. Governments are established to secure the peace in a chaotic and discordant society so those wishing to live peaceably with their neighbors may do so. What does 1 Peter 2:13–14 say about the role of governing authorities?

The biblical function of civil government is clear-cut and straightforward. In real life, confusion happens when governments and government leaders endorse policies that are oppressive to some sectors. What do we do when governments abuse power? While the Bible contains varied examples in response to this question, there are four things we can do:

- *Pray for those in authority* (1 Timothy 2:1–4). This is the Christian’s primary response to all concerns regarding civil government. Prayer, in a way, is high-level activism. You are bringing up your complaints not to the streets to make the government listen but to the only Being in the entire universe who actually wields all power and authority to do something about your concern. This is not to diminish the value of activism but to elevate the necessity of prayer as our primary action plan.
- *Preach and teach God’s word* (Romans 12:1–2). Real transformation happens when the word of God regenerates the hearts of sinful human beings and turns them into followers of Jesus. God’s method of changing the world starts in the heart of every believer through the transforming power of the word. Politics is just one of the tools God uses to effect change.

- *Participate in the political and civic affairs of the nation.* Jesus taught His followers to be salt and light to the world (Matthew 5:13–16). This happens when Christians are actively engaged in political and civic affairs of the nation instead of just sitting on the sidelines complaining about the corruption of society. We enjoin Christians to pay taxes, vote, campaign for just causes, and even run for public office if one has the aptitude for it.
- *Protest as necessary.* This should come only as necessary after much prayer, preaching, and participation. Within the bounds of the law, there is a place for protest to call public officials to uphold the law (Acts 16:35–40). But when we protest, it must be done with respect and the desire to see the justice and righteousness of God reign. Even in our protests, the Scripture says that we must not revile against authority (Romans 13:1–2, 7; 1 Peter 2:13–14).

APPLICATION

- Do you believe that God holds absolute authority over the earth? How should the truth of God's absolute authority affect every area of your life?
- What do you believe about the purpose of civil government? How does your mindset or understanding need to be aligned with God's word? What's one thing you would like to do differently based on today's lesson?
- Read Romans 13:1–4 again aloud and slowly. What word or phrase stands out to you? Why? Meditate on this throughout the week. Ask God to align your thoughts and will to His.

PRAYER

- Thank God for being the absolute authority over our lives. Thank Him that even when governments and regimes fall, His authority continues forever.
- In all honesty, tell God how you think and feel about civil government. Ask Him for wisdom, discernment, and insight into His word so you can respond in a godly manner.
- Lift up your nation and leaders to God. Pray for civil government to function the way God designed it.

23 The Bible & Politics

WARM-UP

- Do you consider yourself a “political” person? What’s the most political thing you’ve ever done?
- Recall a time when someone imposed his or her opinion on you. How did you respond?
- If you could change one thing about your nation, what would it be?

WORD ¹⁴*The LORD God said to the serpent . . .* ¹⁵*“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* **GENESIS 3:14–15**

The government’s power of the sword is a temporary fix for a world gone wrong. Politics and governments don’t save. They are structurally good, but because of sin, they are directionally corrupted. Like the rest of creation, they are awaiting redemption.

This brings us to Act Three of the major storyline of the Bible: Redemption. In Genesis 3:15, God promised to send a Savior who would untwist what had been twisted and cleanse what had been defiled. In the New Testament, we learn that the Savior is Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to fix what was broken in the Fall. The Fall produced death; Jesus came to give life. By breathing new life into us, He has begun the work of fixing, not just the brokenness of human beings, but also the brokenness of the rest of the created order. That includes fixing the “misdirection” of our cultural and political lives. He said we are the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13–14). As redeemed humanity, we must relate to politics and political issues in a way that reflects the glory of God and is consistent with our future hope in His coming kingdom.

However, many Christians are divided about how to relate biblically to civil government. The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, shows different ways the people of God dealt with or responded to kings and governments in general. Here are a few examples.

1 | Nathan rebuked King David.

⁷Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ' . . . ⁹Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?"' **2 SAMUEL 12:7, 9**

When David sinned against the Lord by taking another man's wife and getting her husband killed to cover his own sin (2 Samuel 11:1–27), God sent the prophet Nathan to confront him. While the confrontation sounds like a frank conversation between two men, as a prophet, Nathan needed courage to speak truth to the one in power (2 Samuel 12:1–15). How did David respond to Nathan's rebuke?

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2 | Elijah opposed Ahab.

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." **1 KINGS 18:21**

Ahab did more to provoke the Lord to anger than all the kings of Israel before him (1 Kings 16:33). Throughout 1 Kings 17–19, we see that God sent Elijah to confront him on multiple occasions. The confrontation culminated in a public, fiery showdown on Mount Carmel. After that, Elijah ran away

from the murderous Queen Jezebel. In 1 Kings 21:27–29, how did Ahab respond to the word of the Lord through Elijah?

3 Obadiah ran Ahab's palace while sheltering God's prophets.

³And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, ⁴and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)

1 KINGS 18:3–4

While Elijah was hiding from Ahab, Obadiah, the man in charge of King Ahab's palace, secretly saved the Lord's prophets from Jezebel's wrath. Do you think Obadiah was afraid of going against the king and sheltering God's prophets? Why do you think he did it anyway?

4 Daniel held high office in Babylon and the Medo-Persian Empire.

*Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. **DANIEL 5:29***

Daniel was one of the Jewish exiles who showed a God-given aptitude for learning and skill in all literature and wisdom in Babylon (Daniel 1:17–21). He used these skills to serve the king and the entire Babylonian empire. When Babylon was invaded by the Medes, Daniel served under Darius, the new king. How did God protect Daniel even in the lions' den (Daniel 6:22)? How did King Darius respond to this (Daniel 6:25–27)?

5 | Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king.

*And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me. **NEHEMIAH 2:8***

When news about the devastation of Jerusalem reached Nehemiah, cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, he asked for the king's permission to go and rebuild the city walls. The king granted his request and even allowed Nehemiah to use timber from the king's forest. As a bonus, the king sent with him officers and horsemen of the Persian army. Why did the king give Nehemiah all that he asked for?

6 | Mordecai refused to bow down to the king's chief minister.

*And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage. **ESTHER 3:2***

While Queen Esther was very careful not to break palace protocols (Esther 4:16), her cousin Mordecai defied the king's command to bow down to his chief minister, Haman. Yet, when Mordecai discovered a plot against King Ahasuerus, he sent a message to Esther and saved the king's life. According to Esther 8:1–17, how did Mordecai later serve under the king?

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7 | John the Baptist confronted King Herod.

*¹⁸For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. **MARK 6:18–19***

King Herod took his brother Philip's wife, and John the Baptist confronted him about it several times. As a result, the king had John arrested and imprisoned. What did the king's wife request regarding John (Mark 6:21–24)?

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8 | Jesus paid taxes.

²⁴When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" ²⁵He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" ²⁶And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. ²⁷However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

MATTHEW 17:24-27

Tax collectors had come to Peter's house to collect taxes. Though rabbis are normally exempt from paying taxes, Jesus told Peter to give the tax anyway. Why do you think Jesus chose to pay taxes even if He did not have to? In Mark 12:13-17, what did He challenge the Pharisees to do when they asked Him about paying taxes?

9 | Peter defied the chief priest.

*But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." **ACTS 5:29***

When Peter was arrested the first time in the book of Acts, an angel of the Lord freed him in the night. The next day, he went right back to preaching in public. When the chief priest ordered that he and the other apostles be arrested, they

boldly declared that they would obey God, not men. What did the apostles do after they faced the council (Acts 5:41–42)?

10 | Paul and Peter urged the church to submit to civil authority.

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. **ROMANS 13:1**

¹³Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. **1 PETER 2:13–17**

Both Paul and Peter wrote to the churches to submit to the authority of civil government. Why do you think submitting to Rome would have been difficult at that time? Why did both Paul and Peter ask the believers to do it anyway? For whose sake did Peter ask the believers to submit to every human institution?

The ten biblical examples above show how the people of God responded to government leaders in their day. Some worked with emperors (Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah); others rebuked kings (Elijah, Nathan, John the Baptist). Some worked alongside political leaders (Esther, Daniel), while others had no problem encouraging Christians to submit to flawed governments (Paul, Peter). In short, there is no single clear-cut way to respond to politics and government. Every situation has nuance and context. There is, however, one principle upon which we can anchor our response: the glory of God (Romans 11:36). For every political issue at hand, our response must be filtered with the question: Does this honor and glorify God?

APPLICATION

- Based on these examples, do you think we are always expected to align ourselves with civil government? When and how can we disagree?
- Of the examples we referred to today, which one struck you the most? Why? How does this apply to your life and situation?
- Jesus came to give life and fix what was broken in the Fall. In light of this, how can you relate to politics in a way that honors Him?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the examples in Scripture about relating to civil government. Ask Him for wisdom, insight, and courage to apply this in your life.
- Ask God to fix and restore the brokenness of human beings and the rest of the created order.
- Pray that the Church would be the salt and light of the world. Pray that we would reflect God's glory in all that we do and say.

24 The Church & Politics

WARM-UP

- Did you like studying history? Why or why not?
- What was the most recent object you tried to fix? Were you successful? What happened?
- Recall a time that you changed your opinion on something after hearing someone's explanation. What did he or she say to convince you otherwise?

WORD *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* **MATTHEW 4:17**

When Jesus started His public ministry, His first message was about the arrival of the kingdom of God. We should not miss the gravity of what He said. While some think the Bible has no political message, the truth is that Jesus' announcement of God's kingdom was the strongest political statement He ever uttered. The arrival of a kingdom meant the arrival of a new king. Allegiances would shift; lines would be drawn; people needed to make choices. A new kind of politics had come.

But until today, why hasn't the kingdom of God ushered in all the changes humankind is clamoring for? Why is God's method of fixing the twists and distortions of sin taking so long?

Here's the short answer:

1. *God's transforming power is not politically imposed.* It occurs in the hearts of individual believers.
2. *The kingdom of God is in a state of "already but not yet."* This means that the kingdom of God has already begun but is not yet here in its fullness. It was inaugurated at the first coming of Christ and will be completed when He comes again.

The kingdom is not yet here in its fullness to allow more time for evangelism and missions. This is our mandate as a disciple-making church. Jesus means to save so many people that He is holding the door open a bit longer to allow His gospel bearers to reach the farthest corners of the world and issue the invitation for people to come into His kingdom.

At the same time, the people of God are also called to become a witness to the transforming power of the gospel in all spheres of human society. So while we go forth to proclaim the good news, we are also called to demonstrate this same good news through our lives. The gospel should reach and change every sphere of society: family, government, business, media, arts and entertainment, education, science and technology, and sports. Our conduct and public political engagement must reflect our inner gospel convictions.

Historically, there are at least five views on how the Church has engaged with politics. As we look at these, think through and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each.

1 | Separationist View

³⁹"But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

⁴⁰And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." **MATTHEW 5:39-40**

The separationist view is historically associated with Anabaptists, Amish, and Quakers. They emphasize the teachings of Jesus on forgiveness, grace, and loving your enemies. The separationists take a posture of non-violence, refuse to endorse the use of lethal force or coercion, and teach not to fight back even in self-defense. They believe the Church should be separate from the world, so they

refuse to engage culture and instead retreat to their own isolated communities.

2 | Two Kingdoms View

He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." LUKE 20:25

This view is historically associated with Martin Luther. It teaches that the world is divided into two kingdoms:

- a coercive government by the sword to maintain peace and basic justice in the world (Romans 13)
- a spiritual government by the word and Spirit to gather men and women into Christ's kingdom (John 18:36)

According to this view, the Church should refrain from direct involvement with politics, focusing instead on molding the hearts of Christians. God's saving works and word are separate from the realm of politics.

3 | Prophetic View

“Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.” JEREMIAH 22:3

The prophetic view is mostly associated with the African American church, but is now gaining traction in many parts of the world. The emphasis is on the heart of God for the marginalized, the downcast, *the least of these* (Matthew 25:45). Attuned to the sin and suffering of the people, those who hold this view believe that the role of the Church is to speak truth to power and be the prophetic voice in society. Since it teaches that the Church must relentlessly pursue liberation, justice, and reconciliation, this view is more politically active than all the rest. The final hope of those who adhere to the prophetic view is in the eternal kingdom of God, where peace and justice will ultimately reign, and all things will be made right.

4 | Catholic View

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. JAMES 1:27

The Catholic church teaches of seven areas of culture and public life that they engage the most:

- the dignity of human life
- the call to family, community, and participation
- rights and responsibilities
- preferential care for the poor and vulnerable
- the dignity of work and the rights of workers
- solidarity and commitment for the common good
- care for God's creation

The Catholic catechism also outlines three specific obligations of all Christian citizens: voting, defending one's country, and paying taxes.

5 | Transformationist View

¹³"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

MATTHEW 5:13-16

The transformationist view is historically associated with John Calvin. Its major emphasis is the teaching that Christ transforms culture through the ministry of the Church. In contrast to the Lutheran view of two kingdoms that have nothing to do with each other, the transformationist view teaches that Christ is over all things, including people, churches, and governments.

According to this view, transformation of culture starts with the transformation of individuals. When a person is saved, his or her faith radiates into every aspect of life, both private and public. When this happens, society will be saturated with transformed people, effecting change in the wider culture.

Additionally, because of the teaching on common grace (that the Spirit of God also works outside the Church), the Church should not be surprised to find passionate advocates for justice and wise stewards of the common good outside the body of Christ.

The views presented above are the five general ways the Church responded to political issues in the last 2,000 years. Each view has strengths and weaknesses. For example, while the separationist view championed forgiveness and humility, it opened the church to more persecution because of its posture of non-violence even in extreme circumstances. On the other hand, the two kingdoms view gave the Nazis the perfect excuse to get away with their blind loyalty to Hitler. When Nazi soldiers were asked why they obeyed Hitler's orders, they replied, "We were simply obeying the natural kingdom."

We do not need to pit one view against the others, as each of them has biblical backing. Most contemporary churches frame their political responses by combining two or more of the five historical views mentioned above.

APPLICATION

- God desires all people to hear the gospel and be part of His kingdom. What is your role and commitment to the gospel as you wait for the full arrival of God's kingdom?
- Of the five views discussed, which do you lean toward most? Why? How does your public political engagement reflect your inner gospel convictions?
- The people of God are called to be witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel in all spheres of society. What are two things you can do differently this week in your sphere of society?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His kingdom that is “already but not yet.” Pray that as we wait for it to come in its fullness, we would remain faithful to Him.
- Pray to uphold unity within the body of Christ. Pray to respect others’ differing perspectives and love one another in spite of them.
- Pray that you will be a witness to the transforming power of the gospel in your sphere of society. Ask God for a biblical worldview and to see things the way He wants you to see them.

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25 Doing Politics from the Middle of the Story

WARM-UP

- Which city do you live in? What's your neighborhood like and what do you like most about it?
- Did you ever have to leave a cinema or theater before the ending? Why?
- Who is the best storyteller you know? Why do you think he or she is the best?

WORD *⁵"Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."* **JEREMIAH 29:5-7**

We started talking about civil government by saying that the Bible is better understood if we read it as a narrative divided into four acts: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

God created a good world (Act One) but that world was broken by sin (Act Two). The biggest chunk of the biblical record covers redemption (Act Three, from Genesis 3 to Revelation 20), while the last two chapters of Revelation show us a preview of the restoration of all things (Act Four). We live in the middle of the story.

What does this mean? We are living in a time when redemption has already begun but is not yet completed. We are in the middle of the "already but not yet." Like living through a pandemic, the

end may be in sight but getting there takes time. It is, in many ways, a very real expression of “already but not yet” in our time.

As a church, what do we do from the middle of the story?

1 | Be part of a local church and grow in discipleship.

*⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11***

When we gather as a church every week, we are declaring that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not. That truth has implications on how we live the rest of the week. The church is a formation center for righteousness, both private and public. This is where we grow in our discipleship. As our lives are shaped by the gospel of Christ, our inner convictions will eventually affect the way we approach political issues. How did you become part of a local church, and how have you grown as a disciple?

2 | Preach the gospel.

17” . . . to whom I am sending you 18to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

ACTS 26:17-18

A nation's true hope lies in the transformation of individual lives. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring about this transformation. We engage in politics not to score political wins, but to preach the gospel and make disciples so that the nations will come to know Christ. How do you think society and even interaction online would be different if we bore witness to the gospel of Christ in everything we do or say?

3 | Seek the good of the city.

“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” JEREMIAH 29:7

For seventy years, the Jews lived as exiles in Babylon, where they were surrounded by political enemies every day. However, God did not instruct them to destroy their enemies. He told them to build houses, plant gardens, get married, and have families. The Jews were to go about their social and cultural activities in a way that would benefit the broader population. They avoided two extremes: they neither adapted fully to the Babylonian culture nor withdrew completely from it.

As believers, we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20). We are strangers here on earth and are only passing through. But for the sake of our Christian witness, we seek our society's common good. We need to do good whether we are at home, at school, or in our workplaces. Christians should be excellent accountants, waiters, bosses, and politicians. What does seeking the good of the city look like for you where you are?

4 | Take a broad view.

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein . . . **PSALM 24:1**

As ambassadors of the King, we do not put our hope in politics or expect it to save us. After all, politics is only one sphere of society. Instead, we can work faithfully to renew every sphere and institution of culture—not only politics, but also banking and finance, marriage and family, the arts and sciences, education, entertainment, and sports. Our combined Christian witness in all spheres of society will make those who don't know Jesus yet even more responsive to the gospel. Why is transforming every sphere of society, not just politics, important?

5 | Think of the next generation.

"He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding . . ." **DANIEL 2:21**

Instead of putting our hopes on short-term political activism, we should commit ourselves to consistent political engagement over a long period of time. God's purposes outlast empires and kingdoms. He is the one who sovereignly *removes kings and sets up kings*. Because of this, our political vision should not be limited to our lifetime. We need to work towards comprehensive and sustained cultural witness over generations. How do you think this might look? What are some steps you can take to achieve it?

6 | Pray and worship God continually.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." **JOHN 15:4**

Doing politics from the middle of the story is difficult. We run the risk of disillusionment, distraction, and discouragement. Our constant connection with God is what will keep our hearts tender, our eyes on the prize, and our hands and feet ready for the task. We must be especially consistent in our prayer and worship. How have you learned to take your concerns and requests to God, and to set them aside to worship Him alone?

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APPLICATION

- How have the four acts of the biblical narrative (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration) affected your understanding of the world and God's plan for it?
- Consider the action points discussed today. Which of these do you think you need to apply most? What is one way you can do this?
- Having discussed these topics, what do you think is your role as a Christian in society? What is the role of civil government in our lives?

PRAYER

- Thank God for making sure Redemption and Restoration are part of His overarching narrative for us. Declare how much you need Him in every area of your life.
- Pray that you would seek the good of the city and live out righteousness both in private and public. Pray for God's strength and grace to carry this out every day.
- Ask God for a longer and broader view that carries over to future generations. Pray that you will do your part in being Christ's witness to your community, nation, and the world.

26 The Kingdom of Christ

WARM-UP

- In the last twelve months, tell us about one of the hardest things you did.
- Recall a movie or story that had an unexpected ending.
- What did you think of history classes in school? Was there a specific era or aspect that intrigued you?

WORD *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."* **REVELATION 11:15**

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

PSALM 145:13

Everybody loves a happy ending. We like stories where the hero defeats the bad guys and triumphs in the end. It's not just satisfying to watch. Deep within us, we have an inkling of hope that all things that have gone wrong will be made right. That hope is not misplaced. We're wired to expect victory because that is how our story ends.

The book of Revelation shows us what it will look like: All the kingdoms of the world will fall under the kingdom of our Lord and He shall reign without end. That is to say, Paul's claim that every knee will bow to Christ and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11) will be the future reality of the world. Isaiah saw the same thing and prophesied that the increase of His government and the peace that He brings will never end (Isaiah 9:7). Even the pagan sorcerer Balaam from long ago saw the rising of the King from Jacob's bloodline and His ultimate victory and dominion over other kingdoms (Numbers 24:17–19).

What's different about the kingdom of Christ is not just that it will outlast all other kingdoms, but that it will be characterized by the ideals that we have all been looking for in our governments: righteousness, peace, and justice (Isaiah 9:6–7; 11:1–16; Romans 14:17). King Jesus will prove to be the leader we have all been longing for, and His kingdom will be the fulfillment of our collective ideals, hopes, and dreams for government.

But today, we see that the kingdom of God is still far from the picture the Bible paints. So what do we do? Do we try to solve it socially, politically, economically, or intellectually? If we look at history, we see that the kingdom of God will not be fulfilled in these ways. People, politics, economics, and education cannot save the world. The gospel of Christ tells a different story.

When people put their faith in Jesus, transformation happens first in their hearts before eventually trickling into society. The world is not changed by a wholesale, top-down approach. It will happen when people put their faith in Christ, grow in a loving community, and go into the world to help others encounter Jesus. As this continues and more people are transformed by the gospel of Christ, like the mustard seed and yeast in the parables (Luke 13:18–21), it can bring lasting change to every nation.

This is why the Church is central to the kingdom of God and the transformation of the world.

The Church is how people hear the gospel and experience transformation. It is the center of God's activity in the world and how He accomplishes His kingdom purpose. Do you want to be part of this? We can change the world and usher people into God's glorious kingdom by being involved in what our church is doing.

1 | Be involved in campus ministry.

And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. JUDGES 2:10

Our church and Every Nation—the global family of churches we are part of—has a mandate to reach the next generation. The future leaders of our society are on campus today. That's why we are committed to go where they are and proclaim the gospel to them. If we do not, another generation will arise that does not know God. How does a changed life on campus change a family and a community?

2 | Be involved in church planting.

¹⁵But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:15-16

The apostle Paul was always on the lookout for opportunities to bring the gospel to new places and plant churches (Acts 16:9, 12; Titus 1:5). Once a church had been successfully planted, he moved on to the next place. Like Paul, church planting is important for us. With one foot in the campus and another in the community, we desire for more people to come to Christ. In this passage, what was Paul's hope? Why

do you think he never stopped planting new churches and preaching the gospel?

3 | Be involved in world missions.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." **ACTS 1:8**

We don't just plant churches and advance God's kingdom in our nation. We are called to go and make disciples in every nation. This is in obedience to Jesus' command to take the gospel *to the end of the earth*. Because the world needs the transforming power of His gospel, Jesus calls us to look beyond ourselves, our communities, and even our nation. How have you been involved in world missions? How is Acts 1:8 true in your life?

Campus ministry, church planting, and world missions are not the only ways God's kingdom will be fulfilled on earth. His kingdom is vast and all of His people have a part to play. Our global family of churches is just one part of the body of Christ that seeks to reach the world with the gospel. The truth is, God is doing much more than we know and understand, even in places and regions we may not have heard about.

Our church is committed to participating in God's work today through campus ministry, church planting, and world missions. Together, let us honor God and make disciples. We will do this by establishing Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered, and socially responsible churches and campus ministries in every nation.

APPLICATION

- What is your role in Christ's kingdom? How will you advance His kingdom where you are?
- As a church, why do we believe in campus ministry, church planting, and world missions? How can you be involved in this?
- When the situation around you does not reflect what God designed, what will you do? Whose responsibility is it to advance God's kingdom and make Him known? Why?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His kingdom that will outlast all earthly kingdoms. Declare your trust and hope in Him today.
- Ask God for how you can be involved in campus ministry, church planting, and world missions. Pray that more people would know God through your life and ministry.
- Pray for a community or nation that needs to hear the gospel. Pray for them to experience the transformation that can only come through Christ.

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.

ROMANS 13:1

God & Government

The Scriptures reveal three divinely ordained human authorities, which God has instituted to govern the affairs of earth: family, church, and civil government. We also have the responsibility for self-government under God, which is the foundation of all government. This twenty-six-week material looks at what the Bible says about these spheres of government and the role we play in discipling a nation.

TOPICS INCLUDE

- A Vision for God's Government
- Self-Government under God
- Family Government
- Church Government
- Civil Government
- The Kingdom of Christ



EVERY NATION
PRODUCTIONS