

God AND Government

Sept 11, 2016

The “separation of church and state” is a phrase we are very familiar with in our country. Regardless of your own personal understanding of how it should be implemented, most people would agree that human government and the practice of religion are separate matters. Yet as Christians, we know our faith in God has implications in every area of our life, including how we understand and respond to civil authorities.

In what may be the most tumultuous political cycle in a long time, we must ask ourselves “How does our faith impact our politics?” Setting aside parties and candidates, we want to focus our attention in this series on developing a personal theology of government, and our role in it.

To start, we must go back to the beginning . . . all the way back to Genesis 1. Read Genesis 1:26-28, and discuss the following:

1. What authority did God give to Adam and Eve, as representatives of all mankind?
2. Why do you think God delegated authority to humans? What was God’s intention for Adam and Eve?
3. What were the limits of that delegated authority?
4. How did it change once sin entered into human experience?

Throughout the recorded history we have inside and outside the Bible, we see that every culture almost instinctively develops some form of government. From dictatorships to democracies, tyrannical to benevolent, this world has seen all sorts of different governments.

Since God’s Word transcends all cultures, it guides us in thinking with a renewed mind about all human government and our role in it. Paul helps early Christians understand this in Romans 13:1-7. Read this passage and discuss the following:

1. Given that Paul was writing this passage during the reign of Emperor Nero (who aggressively persecuted, tortured and killed Christians), how do you think his readers initially responded?
2. How can governments consisting of unrepentant sinners be referred to as God’s “servants”?
3. What does it mean to submit to the government? What attitudes, actions and behaviors does this entail?
4. Paul says our submission is not just based on fear of punishment, but also because of conscience (13:5). What does this mean?
5. How do we do as individuals, and as a community at showing respect and honor to those in governing authority over us?