

"Citizenship as Christians"

When it's time to elect government officials, should Christians get involved? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Does the Bible have anything to say to the Christian citizen? Well let's find out!

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. God reveals Himself and His will for our lives through this written Word. The Bible tells us of God's love and His plan for redeeming man. It reveals what's good and what's evil. God's Word reveals what will bless us and what will hurt us. The Bible teaches us the truth, and that truth gives us hope and purpose. The Bible is more than an ancient book; it lives and it speaks to every aspect of our lives. We need the Bible, because we need God's wisdom and His guidance. That's why we study. We're delighted that you've joined us today. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

The founding fathers of the United States recognized God's role in establishing and the prosperity of this country, America. George Washington, said, "That no people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of Providential agency."

Now can we suppose this nation with all its struggles has outgrown the need for God's help? Can we have peace and security, while we reject the morals of the Lord? Do we imagine that we can prosper, while we ignore the Source of all blessings? Can we assume that we have justice while we reject the teaching of the God of all righteousness? When nations forget the Lord and live by human standards, they deprive themselves of the blessing and the righteousness that the Lord's way provides. Pushing God out of our lives is a disastrous decision. William Penn wrote in 1681, "If you are not governed by God, you will be ruled by tyrants."

Now if you'd like to study more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also stream our program on the web at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 1 Peter 2:13 to 17, and we'll explore citizenship as Christians.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 13 to 17. "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond-slaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." That's a reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us as we live in a world that has certain freedoms and privileges, to act like free men and to do what is right so that we may honor You. And Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Proverbs 29 and verse 2 says, "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan." We shouldn't imagine that all people are alike. There's an important difference between one who sets his heart to live right but sometimes does evil and one who sets his heart on evil but sometimes does what is right. Wicked rulers destroy cities and nations, while

righteous rulers bless them. Wicked people are not content simply to be wicked; they want everyone else to join them in their wickedness. Psalm 125 and verse 3 says, "For the wicked shall not rule the godly, lest the godly be forced to do wrong."

When wicked people rule, they open the door for all kinds of evil. Corrupt rulers abuse their power by making laws that oppress the righteous and use public funds to do things that no righteous person could approve. How can anyone who loves what is good support rulers who make laws promoting evil? If I believe a practice is morally wrong, I will not support legalizing that practice. If I believe a practice is morally wrong, I won't vote for or use my influence to support a candidate that will do what God says is evil. If I support an ungodly candidate, I'm giving my consent to his ungodly ways. How can I love God and support what is sinful? How can I hunger for righteousness and then support wickedness?

Now true Christians belong to the Lord. They belong to Him in every aspect of their lives. It's inconceivable that a Christian citizen could vote for someone who supports a platform that contradicts the moral values that they hold. If we elect people who have no regard for God, we'll have to live with their ungodly decisions and ways. Tertullian, encouraged the Christian minority in the pagan Roman Empire of the second century to be the "soul" of their culture. God needs Christians today to be the soul and conscience of our culture. We can bring about moral change if we're willing to speak out against evil. The best way to defeat the devil is to expose his wickedness. Christians have too often retreated into silence and let evil go unchallenged.

Edmund Burke, the 18th century politician said, "That all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Many Christians have so silenced their voices that all one can hear is the ungodly calling for more ungodliness. We are fast destroying ourselves by letting the ungodly go unchallenged. We don't speak this way out of hate for anyone but out of love for God, love for our children, and love for our neighbors. It's not bigoted to hunger for righteousness, it's not bigoted to love the truth. It's patriotic to want what is right and good.

Have we forgotten God is the Judge of all nations? Every nation is accountable to Him. The Lord said in Jeremiah 18 verses 6 to 10, "'Can I (now God is speaking, can I) not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?' declares the LORD. 'Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.'"

The Lord has witnessed our country's ungodly, ungodly disrespect for the sanctity of life, for the sanctity of marriage, and the sanctity of moral purity. Our language has become profane, and our nation is filled with the children of unmarried parents. The more we push God's, and His way out, the more empty, and hopeless, and depraved we become. Now God's Word still says in Proverbs 14 and verse 34, "That righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people." Our national sins are disgraceful, and we have no shame. We've forgotten how to blush; and our consciences have become hardened.

Now God's grace should motivate us to live godly and righteous lives, not remove all standards of Christian morality. Titus 2 verses 11 to 12 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." Should we not be so thankful for what Jesus did on the cross for us that we would turn from sin?

Today our laws allow some evil practices to fill this land. We no longer value the sanctity of life or the sanctity of marriage, as defined in God's Holy Word. We've replaced these with human values, that are destined to corrupt the morality of our homes. We've made being tolerant of everything, whether it's good or evil, into some form of virtue. Well, in tolerating evil, our society has simply become more evil, and it's become more intolerant of God and what He teaches. Many have become intolerant of God's values found in the word of God. They won't tolerate God's regard for the unborn as viable persons. And God speaks of the unborn as people in Psalm 139; Jeremiah 1; and Galatians 1. Nor will they tolerate 1 Corinthians 7 and verse 2 that says every man should have his own female wife, and every woman should have her own male husband.

Many live today as they did in the days of the Judges of Israel. Judges 21 and verse 25 says, "In those days there was no king in Israel. That everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Today people have pushed God out of their thinking and live by their own standards. Believing we can live by our own rules is popular yes, but it's also destructive morally and spiritually. If what people think determines right and wrong, then truth, peace, and morality are lost in confusion.

You see human reason, left to follow its own path, leads society to do unspeakably horrible things. Wicked men will find ways to excuse and justify themselves with every evil desire and every sin. Jeremiah 17 verse 9 says, "That the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" Some people demand the freedom to do as they please, and they don't care who they hurt. When evil men with no conscience or fear of God rule in society, they will lead people away from hope and from righteousness.

Proverbs 14 and verse 12 says, "That there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." God's prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 10 and verse 23, "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it's not in man who walks to direct his steps." We need God's wisdom and guidance. People may think they're wise enough to choose their own way; but any path without God will inevitably end in ruin. People who refuse God's wisdom hurt themselves and they hurt their children.

God said through the prophet Hosea in Hosea 4 and verse 6, "That my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." When we turn against God, we rob our children of the opportunity to know God, to know His holiness, and His righteousness. And we leave them in spiritual darkness.

The books of Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament provides a commentary on the spiritual lives of the kings of Israel and Judah for hundreds of years. God tied the prosperity of that nation directly to the devotion of the king and the people. When the king and the people followed God, God prospered them. When the king and the people defied God, they brought hardships and captivity upon themselves. If we today push God out of our lives, how can we think God will bless us? How can we imagine that God will prosper us?

Character and devotion to God matter in our leaders. Jethro, that's Moses' father-in-law, and priest of Midian, gave Moses some valuable advice. Moses was wearing himself out with his duties and needed help to govern the people. Well Jethro instructed him to "look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens" (Exodus 18 and verse 21). You see, Jethro knew that Moses would need men of good character to govern the people.

These men had to be people that others would respect and follow. They must “fear God.” Now fearing God meant that they took God and His laws seriously. They drew their sense of right and wrong from God not from opinion polls. These men of integrity refuse to be bought with bribes. Moses needed such men to help him govern the people justly and honestly. And you know what, we still need capable officials today who fear God and have integrity.

Proverbs 25 and verse 19 says, “Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.” We’ve all been disappointed by corrupt officials who’ve brought shame to our cities, states, and nation. You can’t count on a man of low character. A man who shows low character in private will have low character in public. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 16 and verse 10, “That he who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.”

Some say a godly man or a Christian should never serve in the government. But Joseph served as second to Pharaoh, and David served as King of Israel. God used Moses to lead His people out of bondage and to build a new nation. The Ten Commandments are both religious and social laws, on which the nation Israel was founded. Ezra was a Jew in the Persian government that Nehemiah served as an authority for the king to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Daniel as a ruler over the whole province of Babylon and a chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel also served as a commissioner to King Darius of all Persia. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius were pagan kings, but Daniel lived a righteous life and was respected for his faith. Queen Esther laid her life on the line to influence King Ahasuerus of Persia, who reigned from India to Ethiopia. Paul mentions Erastus, the city treasurer of Corinth, in Romans 16 verse 23. So, godly people through the years have served as public officials.

The Old Testament prophets called nations and cities to repent of their wickedness. And when people refused God and abused their fellow-citizens, God noticed and He punished the wicked. God said through Amos, “But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5 and verse 24). Oh we need to turn away from evil and turn to righteousness.

Now why does all this matter? Here’s why. When people vote and support the wicked, they’re actually taking a stand against God. Second Chronicles 18 tells how a good king, Jehoshaphat, made an alliance with a wicked king, Ahab, in fighting an enemy. Well God sent a prophet who said in 2 Chronicles 19 verse 2, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD?”

If I vote and support an evil person who won’t stand against sin, haven’t I also said by my actions that I won’t stand against sin? If I don’t cast my vote for god-fearing people, wicked ones will take office. My failure to vote for what is right may allow a wicked person to rule. “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Let’s pray together. Oh Father, we pray that righteousness may rule in this world. And we pray that Your love and grace may come down upon us, and that we may turn from our wicked ways. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Some Christians don’t vote because they believe their vote won’t make any difference. But in 1839 one vote elected Marcus Morton governor of Massachusetts. In 1868 one vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment. In 1876 one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In 1923 one vote gave Adolph Hitler the leadership of the Nazi party. I tell you, one vote can matter greatly. We must exercise our privileges wisely to support what is right and good. We must

let our lights shine through wise and godly choices. We have the privilege to choose godly leaders. Let's use that privilege.

Christians are first and foremost citizens of heaven. We owe our allegiance to the Lord Jesus. Philippians 3:20 to 21 says, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." Now citizenship in heaven is a privilege and a blessing; we must not take it lightly. The best decision that you'll ever make is to follow Jesus Christ. Do it today!

To become a citizen of heaven, believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart. Repent of your sins; you can't walk with God and the devil at the same time. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Confession is a public declaration of your decision to follow Jesus. And be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. It's the time that we have our sins washed away and become a Christian. And when we're baptized, the Lord adds us to His church, He makes us His child. And everyone needs to be a citizen of heaven. Don't wait another day! Come to the Lord.

We hope that today's study of citizenship as Christians has challenged you. If you want a copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. You can also find us on YouTube. Subscribe to it and tell others about it. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs appear on our website at www.searchtv.org. If you get a hold of us we won't ask you for money or put you on a list. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses and a free study sheet to go along with our programs. Now if you call us, don't worry, we won't hound you for money. We're not here to exploit you but to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.