

Choosing Leaders By The Book!

By Dave Welch, Executive Director*

"Now listen to me: I shall give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God,²⁰ then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk, and the work they are to do.

²¹ "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them, as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens."²² "And let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you."²³ "If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace."

Exodus 18:19-23

Introduction

Most people have heard the term “rules of engagement” in relation to military action, often by a news story, some sadly just because it is also the title of a television sitcom. The basic definition of that term is the orders given to military leaders establishing parameters if, how and when to engage in hostile action when encountering an enemy force. It is a sad and tragic reality that many Bible-believing Christians are operating under “Rules of Disengagement” today in regards to choosing our leaders for civil government. There are many excuses given, none of them acceptable, for a follower of Jesus Christ to ignore this basic duty grounded in Exodus 18 – a mandate transcending even the U.S. Constitution.

The first standard given for choosing civil leaders is found in Exodus 18 when Moses father-in-law gave him some sound advice, “Jethro urged Moses “Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them, *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.” (Exodus 18:21).

1

Select out of all the people...

It is appropriate to quickly review the proper role of those in governing authority according to Romans 13:1-7 as “ministers of God”:

MIN'ISTER, n. [L.] Properly, a chief servant; hence, an agent appointed to transact or manage business under the authority of another; in which sense, it is a word of very extensive application.

(Webster 1828 Dictionary)

Romans 13 clearly provides an understanding of God’s limited purpose of governing authority. The term “minister” is used in verse 4 as part of that description, using the Greek word: *Diakonos* -

dee-ak'-on-os (one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master, a servant, attendant, minister; the servant of a king.)

Biblically, civil rulers are servants and since all civil authority is granted by and accountable to God (Romans 13:1-7) the purpose of civil authority is indeed to “minister”.

Is it possible for this ministry to be conducted properly by those who don't believe in the God who gave the authority and who “made the rules”? Or by those who claim to believe but insist His Word is full of errors? It seems evident that like any ministry, the exercise of civil authority will be performed best by disciples of Christ who think and act Biblically.

When the ministry of governing is disconnected from Biblical moorings, there is no possible way for it to retain His perfect balance of justice and mercy. It must then be tossed upon the waves of selfishness, greed, sin and corruption. Sound familiar?

Moses did not go to surrounding peoples to recruit the leaders for this important duty of judging and teaching God's principles; “...*then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk, and the work they are to do.*” (v. 20). He obeyed God and chose out of the leaders of the tribes of Israel according to the next steps of criteria that were given to him – and are applicable today.

2

Able Men ...

A genuine Christian who has received the gift of salvation is a “new creation in Christ” according to 2 Cor. 5:17, however that does not mean that all believers have all gifts, talents and callings. We know that each person is a unique blend of those three characteristics. Would you hire a newly-graduated student as CEO of an established, multi-billion dollar company? Do we place new believers as deacons or elders? Why use a different standard for those we entrust with the sword of civil authority?

3

Men Who Fear God...

“If men will not be governed by God, they will be ruled by tyrants,” stated William Penn as he described the correlation between the condition of peoples hearts and their choice of leadership. People who do not fear – aka “reverance” – God are much less likely to choose elected leaders who do. On the contrary, those who claim the identity of “Christian” have a clear mandate to do just that, however we have very frequently ignored those Biblical principles.

4

Ministry By Any Other Name?

GOVERN, v.t. [L. gubernare. The L. gubernare seems to be a compound.]

1. To direct and control, as the actions or conduct of men, either by established laws or by arbitrary will; to regulate by authority; to keep within the limits prescribed by law or sovereign will. ...Every man should govern well his own family. (*Webster 1828 Dictionary*)

It is fascinating that we hear almost daily about leaders of other nations referred to in their role with “Culture Ministry” (Greece), “Education Ministry” (Chile), “Agriculture Ministry” (South Korea), “Defense Ministry” (Russia), etc., without questioning the use of the term.

In the way of a disclaimer, the role of “minister” within the jurisdiction of the church is certainly a

different function than that of minister within the civil realm. In fact, *“It would probably be a surprise to many that the doctrine of the separation of church and state is a uniquely Judeo-Christian concept. Historically, in most non-Judeo Christian cultures the church and state were in fact one and the same.”* (See USPC’s, *“The Biblical Basis of Civil Government”*)

1. The distinction, however is institutional in nature, meaning that God is still sovereign over both church and state, but each have a unique and assigned role as do the ministers within each institution.
2. We choose to use the term Citizenship Ministry simply because it covers the entire concept of governing for God’s purposes and by His Word. Governing is simply the use of God’s authority to protect the person and property of innocent, law abiding citizens and to punish those who violate the person or property of citizens under the civil jurisdiction (Romans 13).
3. Many would argue, accurately, that government in the United States has far exceeded the Biblical and Constitutional parameters of its legitimate role. Regardless of if and when that is addressed, government at the city, county, state and federal levels touches our lives every day.
4. We are usually not even conscious of how it does until something goes wrong, but from the water you use to shower in the morning, the food you consume (hurriedly!) for breakfast, the car you drive, the fuel in it, the roads you drive on, the government schools at which ninety percent of children are educated, the business or job that provides you income, to the home that is supposed to be your “castle” - very little is left out of government’s reach today.
5. Is it not a legitimate role of the Christian church to assure that governing authority is held to the Biblical standards and limitations of its purpose? Is it not also ministry to assure that it is administered with the proper balance of justice and mercy?
6. Since all civil authority in the United States rests with the citizens and is delegated to government, it is the citizens - particularly Christians - who carry the burden of responsibility for its use. We would propose then that it is a vital and valid ministry of the individual believer and the local church to assure that life, property, nor liberty of citizens are not to be taken without due process of just laws. In addition the poor, the widow, the orphan and the defenseless are not to be oppressed and taken advantage of.

How then, can that occur if we do not actively participate in the choice of “rulers” at every level of government, promote moral virtue in the community, protect the physical, emotional and spiritual condition of our children and be “fully armored” for the battle raging all around us?

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Citizenship Ministry is NOT optional!

Many reasons have been given as to why Christians should or should not vote, either in spite of or due to being disappointed, frustrated and/or disillusioned with political leaders and the political process. Most of the reasons do not address the most important principle and in fact illustrate a remaining weakness in how we think about the arena of governing. We are still far too “Issues Driven”, even if the issues are sound. Genesis 9:6, Exodus 18:21, Matthew 28:18, Romans 13:1, Colossians 1:16 and 2:10, and Ephesians 1:21 all reveal that God has delegated His authority to His people to exercise in accordance with His will.

1. In the United States, voting is simply the extension of His authority to a “representative” to act on our behalf in order to make decisions on affairs of civil government. The responsibility for

the Biblical use of that authority rests primarily with followers of Jesus Christ. If we either do not vote or we vote for men or women who are spiritually, morally and philosophically weak – WE are accountable to God for the misuse of that authority.

2. One of the most clear, timeless and scriptural descriptions of the reason why Christians must vote was given by American Statesman **Noah Webster** in 1832. He stated that, “...*If the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted; laws will be made not for the public good so much as for the selfish or local purposes; Corrupt or incompetent men will be appointed to execute the laws; the public revenues will be squandered on unworthy men; and the rights of the citizens will be violated or disregarded...*”
3. Believer, this is not about politics – it is about ministry! Let’s just reflect on a few realities:
 - a. *Abortion rates are down but is still legal through all nine months of pregnancy; out-of-wedlock births now account for 37% of all births..*
 - b. *Sexual perversity is now becoming a legally protected “right”.*
 - c. *Pornography has exploded as an industry, destroying lives and families.*
 - d. *Drug abuse by pre-teens, teens and young adults continues to increase.*
 - e. *Divorce, sexual abuse of children and spousal abuse are at historically high levels.*
4. Many of our most vulnerable are victimized both by wasteful, faceless bureaucracies and opportunistic leaders bringing ungodly solutions to these problems.
5. *These are primarily symptoms of spiritual, mental and/or emotional chaos – however civil government has a vital role which either rewards good and restrains evil - or vice versa.*
6. Godly leaders will make God-centered decisions which will produce God-honoring benefits in the lives of citizens under the authority of those leaders. Voting is the least we can do to promote righteousness and justice in our communities, state and nation, but is just a small part. God is indeed watching and we must “raise the bar” to assure that we will no longer be found wanting in this vital area of our stewardship. NOT voting is NOT an option for Christians!

Pastors must exert clear and firm leadership through our pulpits and our church communications for EVERY Election to ask EVERY eligible congregant to cast a prayerful, informed and Biblically-defensible vote!



Scripturally, Historically, Legally -YES!

I. Scripturally we MUST

It does not take a Biblical scholar to determine very quickly that the Bible illustrates how God used leaders like Joseph, Esther, Daniel, David, Solomon and even the unrighteous kings for His purposes. In addition, we are told to seek the peace of the city (Jeremiah 29:7) , pray for leaders that we may live peaceable lives (1 Tim. 2:2) and obey earthly authorities(1 Peter 2: 13-15). Also very clear is the correlation between the adherence by the kings to God’s laws and the spiritual and moral direction of the people. Ungodly king = ungodly people.

1. The reality of personal responsibility for our sin and the requirement for personal repentance and surrender to Christ for salvation are clear. It is also evident that when the unrighteous rule, the people bear the consequences, particularly when we have chosen them. Our command is to, “*Select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest*

gain, and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, of tens." (Ex. 18:21)

2. The one major difference between the governing authorities during Biblical times and our own is the direct role of personal responsibility each citizen carries under the Constitution of the United States for its policies. We the people *are* the government and are responsible for the authority vested in the followers of Jesus Christ, referring again to Matthew 28:18-21, "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore..."*

II. Historically we DID

1. Despite the revisionist history taught in government schools and even in many "Christian" educational institutions, the role of Christianity and the Bible in the cultural and governmental foundations of the United States are irrefutable. According to Christian historians David Barton, Gary DeMar, Marshall Foster and Peter Marshall the Bible was a primary and secondary reference in over 90 percent of writings, debates and public discourse during the founding era. Also, for example, at least 52 of the 55 signers of the Declaration of Independence were professing Christians and active church members.
2. U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Joseph Story (appointed by President and "Father of the Constitution", James Madison) said in his *Commentary on the Constitution of the United States*, that "*Probably, at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, and of the . . . [First Amendment], the general, if not the universal, sentiment in America was, that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the State, so far as such encouragement was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience, and the freedom of religious worship...*"

III. Legally we MAY

1. If in fact God ordained government then it is really not a serious question as to whether the church has a right to influence it. The fact that the "you'll lose your tax exempt status" hammer is raised in regards to the 501 (c)(3) non-profit status of incorporated churches—*under IRS regulations that did not exist until 1954*— illustrates the Biblical, historical and Constitutional bankruptcy of the ACLU, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, etc.
2. Since the imposition of restrictions on political speech by 501 (c)(3) churches in 1954, only ONE CHURCH has lost its tax exempt status for TEMPORARILY because of political activities. Please read that again. Pastors and churches have been intimidated into silence with one of the greatest bluffs since poker was invented.
3. The fact is that the duty given by God to be stewards of His institution overrides any man made laws. It is time that His church regain its courage and place Him once again as the Sovereign rather than the State. Churches that are not incorporated or have not sought 501 (c) (3) recognition by the IRS are not restricted in any way, yet are extended tax exemption. More information can be found at www.uspastorcouncil.org/resources.



Conclusion—Pass The Salt, Turn On The Light!

On December 22, 1820, Daniel Webster gave a speech at the bicentennial celebration of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. In that speech the "great orator" summarized the driving force behind the Pilgrims' "errand in the wilderness" when he said, "*Our ancestors established their*

system of government on morality and religious sentiment. Moral habits, they believed, cannot safely be trusted on any other foundation than religious principle, nor any government be secure which is not supported by moral habits. Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens."

We propose a four step cultural redemption plan that every church can and should implement in coordination with as many other pastors and churches in each community as will join them:

1. ***Pray, fast and repent*** – 2 Chron. 7:14 – (humble, seek, pray, turn)
2. ***Serve our neighbor*** – James 1:27 (pure and undefiled religion)
3. ***Raise the standard of righteousness*** - Matt. 5: 13-16 (Apply the salt, shine the light)
4. ***Reap the harvest*** – 2 Chron. 7:14 – (hear, forgive, heal)

The final call to action is a reminder that, while we are restoring the moral, social, cultural and political foundations of our nation to reflect God’s righteousness, we must heed Francis Schaeffer's final words in his last book, “*Love—and the unity it attests to—is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians and that Jesus was sent by the Father.*”

If the church does not consistently take principled, reasoned and Biblically grounded positions on key issues of the day, who will?

TAKING ACTION: Pastors must take citizenship ministry seriously by enlisting a ministry leader and supporting the development of a functioning, ongoing ministry focus in your church. Steps on how to begin a Citizenship Ministry can be found in “Christian Citizenship 101”, which can be downloaded at:

www.uspastorcouncil.org/resources.htm

** - Excerpted and revised from USPC booklet, “Citizenship is Ministry!”*
