

## General Council Member Criteria\*

- a. Attend quarterly General Council summits, workshops and special gatherings as often as schedule permits
  - i. Summits will feature a program that will be approved by the Executive Committee, and will include local, state and/or national featured speakers such as issues experts, elected officials and pastors. Other activities will be informational or action in nature as the need is determined.
- b. Appoint, assign or recruit a Citizenship Ministry Coordinator (either staff or lay leader at your discretion) to serve as the facilitator of educational classes, issues information and voter awareness within your congregation.
- c. Review and cast advisory votes on decisions regarding materials, seminars and conferences, voter information, public policy positions and other relevant activities of the HAPC.
  - i. This would occur via e-mail and fax as directed by the Executive Committee.
- d. Provide sermon notes and/or tapes on mission related topics that can be made available to other council members. (Optional at each member's discretion)

**\* - Only Senior Pastors or equivalent position may serve on the General Council and Executive Committee**



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# The Biblical Basis of Government And Civic Involvement

## Mission Statement

“The mission of the U.S. Pastor Council is to empower pastors and their congregations across racial and denominational lines to impact the culture and community through concerted prayer, to equip our congregations for effective citizenship and to provide a unified Biblical voice on spiritual, cultural, social and moral issues as a means of promoting Biblical righteousness and justice.”

Our seven-fold purpose is called the  
**AMERICA** plan\*:

**A**rticulate Biblical positions on important moral issues from the pulpit and to the community.

**M**otivate congregants to be godly, responsible citizens.

**E**ducate congregants on Scriptural, historical and legal foundations for responsible Christian citizenship.

**R**egister every eligible citizen in each participating church to vote

**I**nform congregants on a regular basis in regard to important local, state and national issues of concern.

**C**oordinate with Pastors and churches of like mind throughout the community to pray, stand and speak together.

**A**ctivate members to effective prayer, service and civic involvement in the community to promote Biblical righteousness and justice.

\* - The AMERICA Plan was created by Dave Welch and is trademarked by Vision America

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### Conclusion

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.**"*

Webster's eloquent words are a charge to people of faith to get involved in their government and the political process. Moses, Joseph, Daniel, David, and Esther may not have been considered "good citizens" of the earthly realm (they were dealing with oppressive governments), but it was their commitment to righteousness and justice that made the "good citizens" of the heavenly realm. In our system of self-government we have the freedom to be proactive citizens.

***"Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens."***

That freedom is still coupled with the stewardship duty to be salt and light in the culture as well. Charles Grandison Finney, a nineteenth century preacher, educator and author put it well when he said, *"Politics are a part of religion in such a country as this, and Christians must do their duty to their country as a part of their duty to God. **God will bless or curse this nation according to the course Christians take in politics.**"*

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feared the ascendancy of a secular, godless state and the despotism it was sure to produce. Many of our forefathers voiced their belief that a free republic's longevity was contingent upon the strength of the religious faith of America's citizens. John Adams, a delegate to the convention from Massachusetts and later America's second President, warned of the demise of a constitutional republic if the pillars of morality and religion were inhibited or undermined.

He said: *"We have no government armed with power contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge or gallantry*

*"Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people and is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."*

*would break the cords of the constitution like a whale goes through a net. Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people and is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."*

The original intent of the First Amendment is something that continues to elude those who advocate

a "wall of separation" between the state and religion. One thing we can be sure of is that the amendment was not an effort to remove religion from public life. Public pronouncements from the framers that religion and morality were indispensable supports of a free republic belie any notion that they endeavored to completely remove the spiritual from the political.

Perhaps at no other time in America's history did our leaders and our citizens understand that the American experiment in self-government was doomed to failure if the free exercise of religion was undermined.

## The Biblical Basis of Government and Civic Involvement

*"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to a political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."*

--George Washington

### Introduction

This proclamation, delivered by our first president at his Farewell Address in 1796, reasserted to our fledgling republic the foundational role that religion and morality must play in the future of the American experiment in self-government.

George Washington and our other forefathers keenly understood that religion, which the famous French historian Alexis de Tocqueville would later refer to as America's "first institution," would inspire, order, and restrain the private and public lives of Americans.

The notion that "God governs in the affairs of men" was enshrined in national sentiment at the advent of the republic.

Grafted into this notion that God governs in the affairs of men is the stewardship duty of the church and individuals believers to be involved in the political arena.

The Bible is replete with examples of faithful men and women who became involved in the affairs of their government, often in spite of hostility to what these figures of the Bible believed.

They were faithful servants who sought to spread God's salt and God's light on the cultures in which they lived. As were the lives of David, Joseph, Daniel, and Esther, we too are citizens of two kingdoms, called to be representatives for God before men.

# 1

## Why Do We Need Government?

Often, Christians contest the significance of government and its role in the Kingdom of God. Some believers consider government to be inherently evil, with no other purpose but to subvert the will of God. There are two rather simple rebuttals to such an assumption, both having to do with the nature and existence of authority as described in the New Testament.

First, there are several passages that reveal that Christ establishes and is head of all earthly authority (*Matthew 28:18, Romans 13:1, Colossians 1:16 and 2:10, and Ephesians 1:21*). If Christ grants earthly authority, then it is accountable to the Gospel of Christ. This applies to all authority, not just government. Other institutions and individuals that possess authority over the lives of others, like churches, corporations, schools, families, pastors, employers, educators, and fathers, must also be held accountable in the same authority.

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Additionally, believers are warned in Romans 13:5 that, “*it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.*” It is vitally important to note that, although we are to submit to government, earthly authority is not unlimited. God’s grant of authority to government is not license to violate the precepts of God’s law – mercy, justice, and order. If government violates these precepts, it abrogates its authority.

Once again, we see that believers have the stewardship responsibility to ensure that their government is in fact obeying God’s law. If it is, its authority remains intact. Government was estab-

U.S. Supreme Court, in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, developed a three part test that is still used by the courts today to define whether government activity amounts to an establishment of religion. Using this definition, an establishment of religion may be defined as any activity by which the government supports a religion or religious belief or activity, or shows a formal, legal preference for one religion over others. *This “test”, however, is not consistent with the original intent of the First Amendment according to the writings of the very men who wrote it.*

It is interesting to note that in *Abington Township v. Schempp* (1963), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment did not sanction a secular humanist state. This case certainly affirms the concern our forefathers had about the rise of a secular, godless state.

***“...the State may not establish a ‘religion of secularism’ in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion...”***

As a matter of fact, the majority wrote in this particular case that “*the State may not establish a ‘religion of secularism’ in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus ‘preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.’*”

# 6

## Morality and Religion: The Twin Pillars of Government

Those who advocate an impassable wall of separation between church and state should not invoke the First Amendment to bolster their agenda. The deliberations of the Constitutional Convention unequivocally show that the framers never intended to remove religion from public life.

In fact, George Washington and his contemporaries greatly

## **Freedom FOR Religion - Not Freedom FROM Religion**

Subsequently, the framers of our federal Constitution endeavored to strike a balance between the church and state by barring the state from establishing a religion or prohibiting its free exercise. Our forefathers sought to prevent a state-established church from gaining a monopoly over politics, but they did not want to take God out of politics. They grasped the biblical concept of separating the ecclesiastical from the political, yet they were guided by the sentiment that God governs in the affairs of men.

Understanding the text that enshrines the biblical concept of the separation of church and state, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, seems elementary: *“Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”* Nonetheless, there is a lack of understanding of the intent of the Constitution’s framers.

For that reason, the First Amendment has been misinterpreted and misconstrued to mean that there exists a “wall of separation” between the political process and anything religious. It is instructive to summarize what the First Amendment actually means given the intentions of its authors and subsequent jurisprudence.

The framers of the First Amendment did not intend to institutionalize a total separation of church and state. James Madison, the primary author of the amendment, when asked what it meant, explained: “Congress should not establish a religion and enforce the legal observation of it by law, nor compel men to worship God in any manner contrary to their conscience.” Furthermore, the framers of the First Amendment did not intend to insulate public life or public thought from religion or religious thinking.

The First Amendment is divided into two clauses that govern the practice of religion in America. The first is the "establishment clause," and the second is the "free exercise" clause. In 1971 the

lished by God for two essential purposes. Its first purpose is to restrain sin. After the flood, God entered into a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Genesis 9). Through this covenant – called the Noahic Covenant – God delegated to man the authority to preserve order in society by allowing him to punish and restrain crime.

In Genesis 9:6 God grants this authority to man: *“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”* In addition to God’s transcendent check on the heart of man, man may hold before man the threat of punishment for sinful behavior through the auspices of government.

God also ordained government so that society would have a form of leadership and organization to represent the masses and ultimately to preserve order. Society needs leaders to make laws and rules that govern us, even down to such mundane matters as speed limits and where to place stop signs.

## **2**

### **The Christian Citizen**

A government that is, as Abraham Lincoln noted in his Second Inaugural Address, “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” requires the participation of the people. For the actions of government to preserve liberty, justice, and order, Christians must play a continual and prominent part in the political process.

Christian citizens have a stewardship duty, not just a right, to take a course in politics that will steer politics in the direction of the glory of the Kingdom of God. If politics is in a state of disarray, Christians are partly to blame for failing in their duty to be salt and light in society.

Christians tend to shy away from political involvement because politics is often associated with “dirty business.” Looking to the

Bible we see many examples of men and women who participated directly in politics despite its propensity for moral lapse.

Daniel served as prime minister of both Babylon and Persia while Israel was in captivity there. Imagine Daniel telling Nebuchadnezzar that politics just was not for him because it was too dirty, or telling Darius he did not want to get entangled in the affairs of state because it would mean mixing politics and religion.

Consider Esther, a Jewish believer who became a Persian queen and used her influence to rescue her people. Or Joseph, a Jew who became a prime minister of Egypt and saved his people from the seven-year famine.

Even in the New Testament there are intimations of believers within Caesar's household (Philippians 4:22). In Romans 16:23 the apostle Paul mentioned "Erastus the chamberlain," who sent greetings to the Christian believers in Rome.

A chamberlain was a city treasurer, and the post of treasurer in a city the size of Corinth (the probable place from which Paul wrote the Book of Romans) was definitely a high political position. Other followers of Jesus, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, sat on the Sanhedrin, the political and ecclesiastical court and governing assembly of Israel.

A Christian also can find instructions for citizenship from the prophet Jeremiah's advice to the Jewish exiles in Babylon: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7). The Jews in Babylon had a civic duty to work for the welfare and prosperity of Babylon.

*As Christian citizens  
in an increasingly  
secular America, we  
too are called to safe-  
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fare, and betterment  
of society.*

Second, and more importantly, Jesus' answer that we are to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Luke 20:25), affirms that taxation is within Caesar's jurisdiction but also that Caesar's authority is limited to what is granted to him by God. As the scripture relates, the question was intended to trap Jesus into saying that either he paid allegiance to God at the expense of Caesar, or that he paid allegiance to Caesar at the expense of God. Either way, the Pharisees could report Jesus to the Roman authorities or to the Sanhedrin.

The result of this exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus afforded unprecedented legitimacy to the state (I.e., the authority to tax), yet it also set boundaries that the state had never before observed (submission to Christ's authority).

Lord Acton, nineteenth century English philosopher, articulates the role the church gained through Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question: "*To limit the power of the State ceased to be the hope of the patient, ineffectual philosophers and became the perpetual charge of the universal church.*"

The argument over the separation of church and state has been a constant one since the colonization of America. As we know, the early colonists' principal motivation for coming to the New World was to propagate the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The colonists were fleeing from a country that had clearly violated the doctrine of separation of church and state as intimated in the Old and New Testament.

The English crown usurped rightful authority from the independent church and coercively imposed a state-established religion on its inhabitants.

status, or that the church would bear the power of the sword.

Old-Testament Israel did not practice the separation of church and state as we do today in America. Nonetheless, the separation of the ecclesiastical and the political can be traced to theocratic Israel. The judges in Israel constituted the political authority, while the prophets and priests constituted the ecclesiastical authority. Separation was marked by the fact that the priests only came from the tribe of Levi, whereas the judges came from various tribes.

After the establishment of monarchical rule with King Saul, the distinction became even more marked: kings came from the tribe of Judah, while priests still came from the Levites. Basically, a king could not be a priest, and a priest could not be a king (with

the sole exception of Moses). As a matter of fact, on at least two occasions Israel's king tried to usurp the functions of the priesthood and was severely punished by God.

Saul offered a peace offering to himself, and as a result God cut Saul's line off from the kingship of Israel (1 Samuel 13). In the second instance, King Uzziah became proud and attempted to burn incense on the altar. For punishment, God inflicted King Uzziah with leprosy for the rest of his life (2 Chronicles 26:16-21).

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In the New Testament Jesus affirmed even further the concept of the two separate kingdoms of church and state. The Pharisees' question posed to Christ about paying tribute to Caesar intimates a duality of kingdoms. First, the question itself, whether it is right to pay taxes to Caesar (Luke 20:22), implies that there is a higher standard – God's law – that Caesar's demands are to be judged.

As Christian citizens in an increasingly secular America, we too are called to safeguard the peace, welfare, and betterment of society. Paul reaffirms Jeremiah's instructions when he tells us to pray "for holiness" (1 Timothy 2:2). Through the instruction of Jeremiah and Paul, we as Christians can conclude that we are to both work and pray for the prosperity of our nation.

### 3

## Responding to Arguments Against Political Involvement

Most of the objections to Christian involvement in government come, surprisingly, from Christians. Following are a few of the most prevalent objections and how a Christian might respond.

OBJECTION: *"I believe that Christians should be saving souls, not politicking. After all, the Bible says we shouldn't be entangled in the affairs of the world."*

RESPONSE: Although believers are compelled to win souls for Christ, even Paul declared that he had *"not hesitated to proclaim... the whole will of God"* (Acts 20:27, emphasis added). God's dominion is comprehensive, and we, as his stewards, are commissioned to spread the Gospel—the full counsel of God—to every sector of society, including government.

OBJECTION: *"Politics is dirty."*

RESPONSE: So are all other areas of life. Sin is simply a universal aspect of the human condition. Former U.S. Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon poignantly remarked that, *"For the Christian to say that he will not enter politics because he might lose his faith is the same as for the physician to say that he will not heal men because he might catch their disease."* Christians who refuse to get involved with politics consign the realm of politics to the secular and the unscrupulous. Edmund Burke put it well when he said,

*“The fate of good men who refuse to become involved in politics, is to be ruled by evil men.”*

OBJECTION: *“Why bother to renew the world? Christ is coming back!”*

RESPONSE: Just as God can work through us to spread the Gospel and reach souls for Christ, God can work through us to transform political institutions. It is worth reiterating Jeremiah’s advice to the Jewish exiles in Babylon: *“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you will prosper”* (Jeremiah 29:7).

OBJECTION: *“I’m a pastor, and I shouldn’t blend the Gospel with politics.”*

RESPONSE: It is the duty of religious leaders to proclaim “the whole counsel of God” to their congregations. Pastors should educate their congregants on what the scriptures say about government and societal issues. A pastor’s congregation consists of citizens, and these citizens should be educated not only about their responsibility to the church, but about their responsibility to their country. We are citizens of two kingdoms. Colonial Pastor Jonathan Mayhew stated in 1765 that, *“Why, then, should not those parts of Scripture which relate to civil government be examined and explained from the desk, as well as others?”*

OBJECTION: *“I’m only one person, I can’t do anything alone.”*

RESPONSE: That is true, but only to a certain degree. One person rarely has much political impact, however, with God’s help and the help of fellow believers and citizens, one person can have considerable clout. Throughout history God has used ordinary people to achieve awesome things. For instance, God chose Gideon, a simple man from a poor family in one of the lesser tribes of Israel, to save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon even protested God, *“I am the least in my family.”* But the Lord answered him unequivocally, *“I*

*will be with you”* (Judges 6:15,16). Consider David as well: although he was judged by his own father to be the least likely of his sons to be chosen as king of Israel, it was David whom God chose (1 Samuel 16).

## 4

### Dealing with the “Wall of Separation” Myth

Perhaps the most glaring threat to the Christian’s constitutional right and biblical duty to participate in the political process is the notion that there is an impassable barrier between the state and church. It is important for Christians to understand the history behind the doctrine of the separation of church and state institutionally, and the proper interpretation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

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 pagan cultures the church and state were in fact one and the same.

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The king was not only the head of the state, but the head of the church as well. In Rome for instance, the word of Caesar was the law and the worship of Caesar the religion. For all practical purposes, Caesar was the state and the church. Conversely, based upon the commandment to place nothing or no one above the one true God (Exodus 20:3), the Judeo-Christian tradition embraced the separation of church and state. The purpose of the doctrine has been to abate the ever-present possibility that the state would be elevated to god-like, quasi-religious