

Providential Perspective

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Choosing Godly Officials

by Stephen McDowell

We have the privilege in America to choose those who govern us. As Christians, it is also our duty to do so.

Civil government is a divine institution of God. It exists to protect the life, liberty, and property of citizens, enabling them to more effectively advance the Kingdom of God. Civil leaders are servants of the people and of God, and are to govern under His higher authority. Rulers are to be ministers of God for good. (See Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; Luke 22:25-26.)

For government to fulfill its divine mission, Christians must be involved in selecting good men and women to office. Ideally they would meet all the qualifications for Godly officials. When Moses told the Israelites to select from among them those who would govern them, he set forth a number of Biblical qualifications. He said: "You shall select out of all the people, able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain" (Ex. 18:21). "Choose wise and discerning and experienced men" (Deut. 1:13). He cited three general qualifications for governing officials: fear of God, Christian character, and Biblical worldview.

1. Fear God

The fear of God is an essential qualification for a godly official. What are such people like? Matthias Burnet explained in an election sermon in 1803 that they are, "men acting under the belief and awe of God as their inspector and judge, to whom they consider themselves accountable for their conduct and whom they fear to offend."¹

A man who fears God is not someone who simply professes faith, attends church, or culturally embraces Christianity, but someone who has a reverential fear of the Almighty. "When the righteous rule, the people rejoice" (Prov. 29:2). The righteous have right standing with God; they fear the true and living God.



"Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest, of a Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." — **John Jay**,
First Chief Justice of Supreme Court

2. Christian Character

A second qualification is morality. They should be "men truly honest and upright in their principles and views, not actuated and governed by the sordid motives of self interest and aggrandizement in their desire and execution of office, but by a sincere regard to the public good."²

Corrupt and unprincipled rulers (like Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler, and Mao Tse-tung) have brought great misery to mankind, including loss of

liberty and the downfall of nations, while U.S. socialist and progressive leaders of the 20th century have done much to steal the liberty and property of many. The actions of these leaders flowed from a wrong worldview. Many displayed dishonest and immoral behavior.

Chandler Robbins, in an election sermon in 1791, said, "Nothing will so surely, so rapidly bring on the dissolution of society, and the loss of the liberties of a people, as a want of virtue and integrity in their rulers."

A vital quality for leaders is honesty. Proverbs 29:12 says, "If a ruler pays attention to falsehood [hearkens to lies], all his ministers become wicked." If they cannot keep personal vows or oaths, we cannot expect them to keep national vows. We have witnessed the negative consequences of such conduct in recent years.

Knowledge or intelligence (as man sees it) without honesty — a good genius with a bad heart — is worse than an ignorant honest man because the evil genius could find more subtle ways to rob the people of their rights. Some have argued support for certain candidates based upon their intelligence, saying: "He's so smart. We ought to elect him." Yet, if such a person, no matter how smart, is reasoning from wrong presuppositions, or has bad character, he will not be a good leader.

Humility is a second great quality needed in leaders. Jesus taught that leaders are to be servants (Matt. 20:25-28).

3. Biblical Worldview

Thinking Biblically is of great importance because a leader will act and vote based upon how he thinks

(Prov. 23:7). The best leaders will have a Biblical philosophy of government, understanding its purpose and limited nature.

The tendency of fallen man is to assume too much power for himself, often justified for benevolent reasons. Jesus taught we are to render to Caesar (civil government) things under his jurisdiction (which are very limited) and to God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:15-21). As America has moved towards socialism, we have been rendering to Caesar the things that are God's. Under all forms of statism, civil government assumes the role of God, the family, the church, and the private sector.

Socialism is the golden calf of modern America and is a great threat to liberty and prosperity. Discerning whether a candidate adheres to a Biblical or socialistic philosophy of government comes down to the question, "Who controls the property and children in the nation?" Whoever controls the property controls the present; whoever controls the children controls the future. God has given this responsibility to the family, not the state.

We must seek to choose leaders who understand the divine, but very limited, role of civil government. Without knowledgeable Christians participating in elections, America will become another Tower of Babel, with man looking to himself for all things.

Godly leaders begin with Godly citizens. Reform begins in our house, but it will eventually be reflected in the state house and the White House. America needs Godly transformation. Those who are transformed need to be eternally vigilant to have this reflected in our civil leaders.

The election of unprincipled men produces misery and tyranny, but Godly rulers bring peace, prosperity, justice, and rejoicing. If we fulfill our duty and place Godly men in office, our future will be bright.

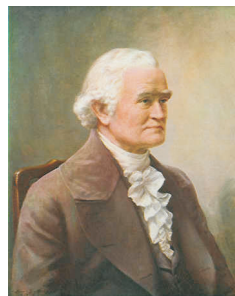


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Stephen has trained people from 100 countries to apply Biblical truth in all spheres of life, consulted with government officials, assisted in starting political parties, and aided in starting Christian schools and Biblical worldview training centers. He has authored and co-authored over 30 books and training courses including Monumental: Restoring America as the Land of Liberty and Liberating the Nations.

End Notes

1. Matthias Burnet, "Religion and Government the Foundations of Order, Peace, and Security, in Society," *An Election Sermon Preached at a General Assembly of the State of Connecticut at Hartford, on the Day of the Anniversary Election, May 12, 1803.*
2. Burnet.
3. Chandler Robbins, "And Also in Judah Things Went Well." *A Sermon Preached before His Excellency John Hancock, Governour; His Honor Samuel Adams, Lieutenant-Governour; the Honourable the Council, and the Honourable the Senate and House of Representatives, of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, May 25, 1791, Being the Day of General Election.*

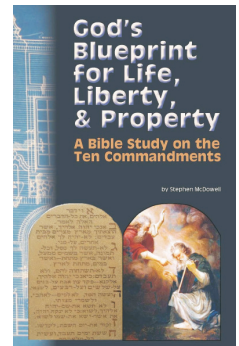


"[L]et it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for yourselves rulers, 'just men who rule in the fear of God.' The preservation of a republican government depends

on the faithful discharge of this duty; 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 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. If a republican government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws."

— Noah Webster

God's Blueprint for Life, Liberty, & Property: A Bible Study on the Ten Commandments



America is becoming a lawless society because the church has become lawless. The church has in many ways disregarded all uses of God's basic moral laws as revealed in the Ten Commandments: for civil use as a curb against sinful action in society, for didactic use as the rule by which we should govern our lives and grow to maturity, and for theological use as a mirror that serves as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

God's moral law as contained in the Ten Commandments is necessary for us today. We must have a thorough knowledge of the Commandments and their application to all of life. To the degree that they are neglected or rejected is the degree to which we will decline as a people and lose the great blessings that come as we obey His perfect, true, righteous, sure, holy, just, inspired, and good law.

Through a series of questions and answers, using hundreds of Scriptures, this Bible study will guide you through the prohibitive nature of the commands, the positive corollaries and rights rooted in these commands, and their application in civil society.

Martin Luther wrote, "Anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures." God's great wisdom is seen in His moral law, first written on the conscience of mankind at Creation, next written by the hand of God on the tablets that Moses delivered to the children of Israel, and finally written on the heart of the regenerate under the New Covenant. His Commandments contain the seeds of all the wisdom in the Scriptures.

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