

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Matthew 22:21

Lesson #50

Rendering to Caesar

11/06/2016

Do not place your hope and faith in

Human government • American uniqueness • Political power

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. **Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.**”

1

Do not place your hope and faith in

Human government • American uniqueness • Political power

Does the Bible prescribe any one FORM of human government?

Does AMERICA occupy a special place in God's kingdom?

Is Kingdom POWER political?



2

1 Corinthians 1:23-24

“but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

3

Two contrasting expressions of power

**The world's
Power**



**KINGDOM
POWER**



4

Philippians 3

“7 But **whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss** for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 **that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;** 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

5



As a powerful woman, how do you respond to those who say that women are not free to be ordained in the Catholic Church?

“Power in the Kingdom of God is the freedom to love. I have that freedom and I do not need a position or a title to exercise that power.”

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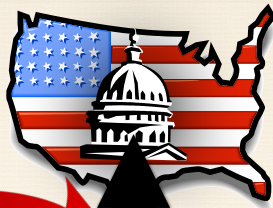
“of, for, and by the people”

The USA officially derives its powers from (God’s image through) its citizens.

“We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness: — That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, **deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the governed;**”

The Declaration of Independence

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Enlightenment
ideals of human
freedom from
external
authority

Greco-Roman
Representative
Democracy

Biblical moral
values and
worldview

Christian influence is building from up.

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Kingdom power

- ✓ Jesus was not a political revolutionary or a community organizer in resisting an oppressive state **(even though he moved within an unjust political system).**
- ✓ Jesus was not a warrior exercising military force to bring in his kingdom **(even though he was in a serious conflict with his culture).**
- ✓ Jesus was not a rich man using economic leverage to shape society **(even though most of his followers were from among the poor).**
- ✓ Jesus did not see human government as his empire **(even though he was building God’s kingdom).**

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The power of the early church

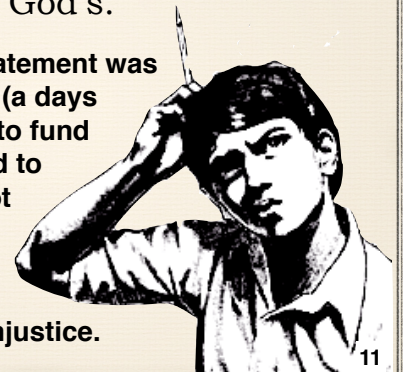
- ✓ Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Cor.12) and his laying aside of “all things” to know Christ (Phil.3:7-11) **(even though he had great influence as a Pharisee).**
- ✓ Peter advocated submission to Nero **(even though Peter was by temperament a zealot).**
- ✓ The early church tolerated injustice **(even though many of them could have rebelled or revolted).**
- ✓ The early church submitted to martyrdom **(even though many of them could have compromised their faith).**

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Matthew 22:21

“Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

- The context of this statement was the poll-tax to Caesar (a days wage for every adult, to fund the Roman gov.). It led to the origin of the Zealot party and reveals a lot about Jesus’ teaching on political action in the face of injustice.



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Christian alien ambassadors have multiple citizenships which often conflict.



**Citizens of
the Kingdom
of God**



**Citizens of
the World of
humanity**



**Citizens of the
Country of
residence**

1 Peter 1:1

**"To those who reside
as aliens . . . chosen
of God"**

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What are we to render to God?

FAITH - HOPE - LOVE

- Sin is displaced faith, hope, and love.

Romans 12

"¹ I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And **do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."**

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**With respect to the secular culture
the church is called to be a
thermostat not a thermometer.**

We are critical of a communist government forcing its values on the church in China.

But seem to have no problem with our churches willingly adopting capitalistic values.

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American values that can affect the church



1. **God will save me with my toys and crutches.**
2. **If it produces tangible results it's of God.**
3. **God's plan is for my personal happiness.**
4. **Competition makes everything better.**
5. **Growth & size define success.**



15

"The penalty good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men."

Plato

"Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

Martin Luther King Jr.

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Rules of engagement #1 CIVILITY

James 1

"¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of **first fruits among His creatures. ¹⁹ This you know, my beloved brethren, But everyone must be **quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger**. ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."**

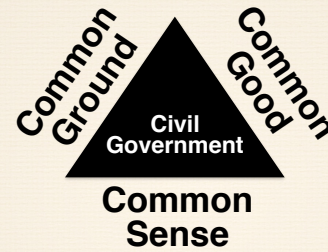
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Empathetic listening
Grow antenna
not horns.

Peacemaking
Build bridges
not bunkers.

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Civility in a pluralistic society



- **Understanding** - Empathetic listening.
- **Cooperation** - Working as a team from common ground.
- **Compromise** - Forbearing with those who differ.
- **Tolerance** - Knowing which issues to fight for and die for.

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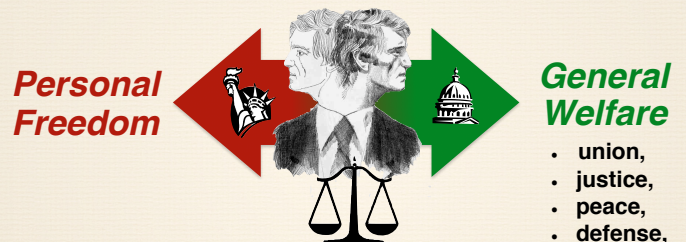
The role of our government?

“We the people of the United States, in order to **form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty** to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

U.S. Constitution (preamble)

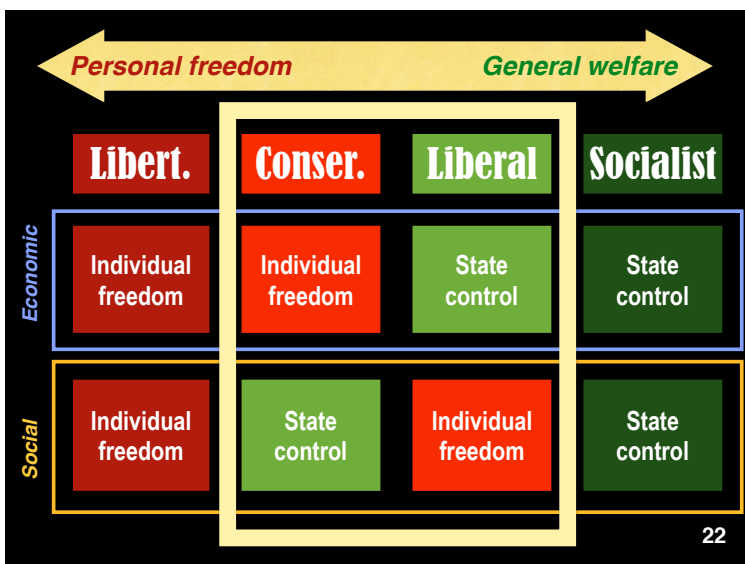
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Rules of engagement #3 COMPROMISE



These values result in policies and laws that invite debate and demand compromise.

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Things to avoid

1. **Majoring on minor issues** - single issue decisions.
2. **Straw man** - Answering a matter before hearing both sides.

Proverbs 18:13

“He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”

3. **Narrow perspective** - Failing to consider the big picture.

John 3:16

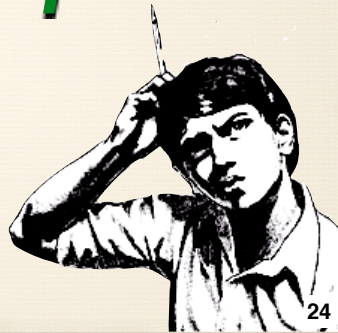
“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . .”

4. **Misinformation** - Failing to fact check.

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Some popular misconceptions

held by many conservative Christians.



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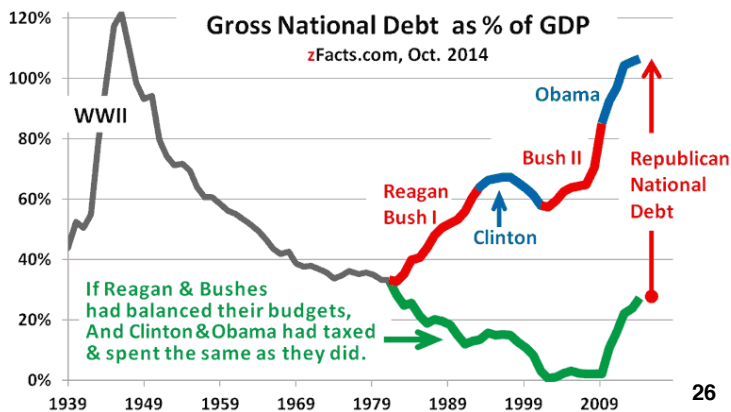
"We are weak in defense spending."



The world's top 8 military spenders in 2015
Sourced from (SIPR) Stockholm International Peace Research

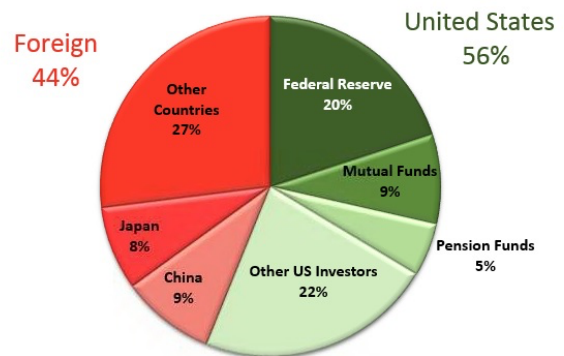
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"Our national debt is due to the Democratic Party primarily."



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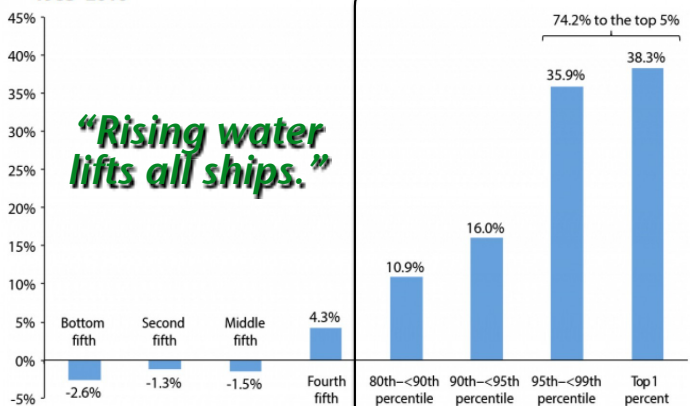
"China owns our debt."



Debt Held by the Public, December 2015
Source: U.S. Treasury Department. Countries include purchases by that government and by investors with accounts in that country.

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Share of total household wealth growth accruing to various wealth groups, 1983-2010



Source: Wolff (2012)

Economic Policy Institute 28

"Socialized medicine does not work and is disliked wherever it exists."

- Why do other countries not want our system?
- Why do so many countries with a single payer system seem to love it?
- How else can costs be controlled?
- Why have we been able to make peace with similar government run programs like education?

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"The Supreme court should NOT interpret the Constitution (just apply it)."

- That's the same line that is used by some Christians with respect to the Bible.
- The constitution was purposely worded in general terms ("promote the general welfare") calling for both interpretation and application.
- Both the political right & left have interpreted the Constitution along ideological lines.
- Both the political right & left accuse the other of disrespect for the Constitution - *both have a point.*

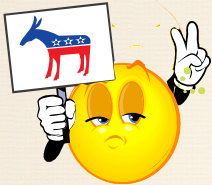
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"New Supreme court appointments will make or break our nation."

- Of the 4 likely vacancies over the next 8 years - 2 are held by conservatives and 2 by liberals.
- The President appoints - the Senate must confirm.
- If Obama's appointment (Merrick Garland - a centrist) is nominated and accepted and the two liberals are replaced with liberals, that leaves one appointment (Kennedy) in the balance.
- There is little reason to believe that this one appointment will be so radical that all is lost.

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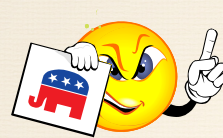
The religious left is tempted to:



- Give the state a Messianic role in the life of people. **"The state functions as savior."**
- Define the human dilemma in material terms. **"Save bodies not souls."**
- Promote community apart from the Spirit of Christ. **"Ethics is an economic & individual rights issue."**
- See the poor as (primarily) victims of the greedy rich and a capitalistic system that takes unfair advantage of them. **"The poor need a hand and a handout."**
- Look down their nose at the political right. **"Conservatives are selfish, materialistic, intolerant, and evil."**

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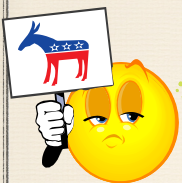
The religious right is tempted to:



- Make uncritical nationalism a sacred calling. **"Our country is always right."**
- Define God's blessing in terms of the American dream. **Kingdom values get confused with personal material blessing.**
- Confront select personal moral sins only. **"God will bless us if we repent of abortion, immorality, & socialism."**
- See the poor as (primarily) lazy and irresponsible who could change their state if they would only work harder, and smarter. **"The poor only need opportunity."**
- Demonize the left. **"Political liberals are always naive and usually (always) power hungry, wrong, and probably not Christians."**

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Both sides share some things in common:



- They are preoccupied with the temporal / material. **"It's all about this life and now."**
- They are convinced that the solutions are political. **"It's all about social systems."**
- They associate their politics with their theology. **"God is on our side."**
- They are more committed to being "understood by" rather than "trying to understand" each other. **"We don't need or care to hear about your ideas."**
- They demonize the other side. **"We are the only ones addressing the real issues with the right motives, and realistic solutions."**

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How should a Christian vote?

- Remember where your **hope** is and what the **Scripture** says and does not say about human government.
- Vote for people and policies that work for **"the common good"** - peace and justice.
- Seek a wise **balance** between individual liberty and the common good or "general welfare".
- Respect the fact that the **distinct social moral demands** on the church are different than those on a secular state with pluralistic values.
- Base your political arguments on the **common** ground, sense, & good of the general public.

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