

A Biblical View of Law and Politics

By Trey Dimsdale

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Proverbs 31:8–9. These verses give a very strong command to stand up for what is right and to defend others. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What are some concrete things disciples can do to stand against things that are unjust for individuals? What can they do to stand up for what is right in the political process?

Assignment Two

Read Luke 10:29–37. Through the example of the despised Samaritan, Jesus instructed us to show mercy even to those who would not show mercy to us. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What are some ways Christ followers can show mercy as individuals and as groups through their churches?

Assignment Three

Read Exodus 5:1–9, 22–23. Imagine you are Moses. Write a short note to a friend describing how you feel about demanding justice for the Israelite slaves from the powerful pharaoh. Prepare to share the note with your group.

Scripture to Memorize

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Jeremiah 29:7

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the role civil law plays in shaping society and the obligations Christians have to work through the political process to ensure just laws and a just society.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Marena and her family are a part of a small, progressive Muslim community that lives in a town that is mostly Christian. She dresses like any other person, is liked in her neighborhood, is a hard worker and loves sports. Marena is looking forward to a promotion this year at work when the state suddenly passes a law that excludes Muslims from working in public schools. Is Marena being treated unjustly? How should Christians respond? Should Christians even be concerned, since, after all, the law doesn't affect them—only Muslims?

Read Isaiah 10:1–3 out loud.

Introduction

The situation described in the **Real-Life Scenario** may seem unlikely in your community, but it happens all the time around the world. There are nations where the majority group excludes Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, women and many other groups from public life.

Even in the United States, not that long ago, African-Americans were forced to attend separate schools, drink from separate water fountains and ride in separate train cars. “Separate, but equal” was considered a just way to order society, and the laws of many cities and states made it illegal to order society any other way. Few people today believe “separate, but equal” is just, and fortunately our laws have been changed so that is no longer the official policy of our state and local governments.

Why is this or any other issue that involves the law or the political process something disciples should care about? Isn't politics a dirty game in which no one can be trusted and anyone can be bought? Should disciples care only about the spiritual lives of their neighbors, or should disciples care about their time on earth, too?

Studying the Passage

Verse 1–3. Decree iniquitous decrees . . . day of punishment. The prophet Isaiah claimed that those who enact bad laws will experience misery and calamity.

Discussion Questions

In a republic such as the United States, people like congressmen and city council members “enact” statutes (another word for “laws”). Does this verse apply *only* to them? Or does it apply to voters who elect them for the purpose of enacting statutes? In such a system, do Christians risk God's judgment by failing to do all they can to see that evil statutes are not enacted?

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share answers to the following questions: What are some concrete things disciples can do to stand against things that are unjust for individuals? What can they do to stand up for what is right in the political process?

Studying the Passage

Verse 2. Turn aside from the needy. The Hebrew language uses only a few words that are translated as “poor” or “needy.” Those words don't always refer to material wealth alone. They

usually carry with them the meaning of “oppressed” and can include any group that is mistreated, abused or taken advantage of.

Discussion Questions

According to Isaiah, what are ways a statute is evil? Think about what is happening around the world today. What are some ways you could describe countries and regions where groups are mistreated and oppressed? (Are they rich or poor? peaceful or turbulent? etc.)

On Your Own

In the space below, list some ways you can be involved in the political process to ensure the laws of the U.S. are just and not evil.

Studying the Passage

Verse 2. And rob the poor . . . of their right. In order to rob a person of something, that person must rightfully own it. This verse implies that the rights people have are not a result of a statute or a law. Isaiah clearly identifies the poor as being God’s people just as the rich are. People possess rights because they are human and because they are created by God and in God’s image—all people, not just the rich or the powerful.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: What are some ways Christ followers can show mercy as individuals and as groups through their churches?

Discussion Question

Isaiah told us that *all* people possess rights because they are created in God’s image. Jesus gave an example of neighborly love and concern through the parable of the good Samaritan. What groups that are a part of our society are most disrespectful and intolerant of Christians? How can disciples follow the example of the good Samaritan when dealing with these groups as we remember that they, just like us, are created in the image of God? How can disciples show love to others with whom they disagree without compromising the truths taught in Scripture?

Studying the Passage

Isaiah began this chapter with the phrase “Woe to . . .” (v. 1). Verse 3 also emphasizes the fact that God takes it seriously when a society mistreats any group within it. The consequences can be severe.

Verse 3. punishment . . . ruin. Sometimes these consequences come through direct judgment of God as in ancient Egypt when Pharaoh refused to release the Israelite slaves. At other times the consequences are much more subtle, in that no society can thrive long term which does not have laws that ensure justice for all people.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share a note they wrote.

Conclusion

God cares about all people because He created them. Each person is an image bearer of the Lord, and this is what gives the person dignity and makes that person worthy of respect. Good laws protect the God-given rights of all members of society.

Believers are commanded by Scripture to be concerned about this and to stand up for those who are hurt by evil laws. Believers in America are given a powerful gift by God in that the system by which laws are made is open and can be influenced. Since believers can have a voice in shaping laws through the political process, they have an obligation to work to see that no evil statute is enacted and that the rights of all people are respected.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Laws are the official rules enacted by a government that order society, and *politics* is the process by which these laws are made. All members of society have rights that are given to them by God simply because He created them in His own image (Isaiah 10:3).

Every man, woman and child is an image bearer of the King and is loved and cherished by Him. Christ followers are commanded by Scripture to stand up against injustice and to work to see that the rights and dignity of all people are respected (see Proverbs 31:8–9).

The United States and other free nations provide a special privilege and obligation to believers. As hard and as frustrating as the political process sometimes is, every member of society can participate in the process by voting, by writing letters to government leaders and by running for office themselves.

Christ followers are commanded to work to ensure the just treatment of every person created in God's image. These examples of participation are just the beginning of a long list of creative ways believers can and should labor to make sure the nation's laws are not evil but good.

Follow up Question

What can you do now and in the future to see that the laws of our society are just?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.