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GOD'S SYSTEM OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Many, if not most, Christians begin with the wrong question of *who they should vote for* rather than the more important question of *how they should vote*. Asking the correct question is fundamental to knowing how to arrive at the correct answer.

If you were to come to me with your personal life in shambles and you didn't know which way to turn, and you said, "Tony Evans, help me," I would open up my Bible, identify the cause of your personal dilemma, and speak God's truth about your situation—giving you God's resolution for whatever it is that you are facing.

If you were to come to me with your family life in shambles with both you and your spouse seeking a divorce because of chaos in your home, and you said, "Tony

Evans, help me," again I would open up my Bible, identify the cause of your familial dilemma, and present to you God's solution for whatever it is that you are facing.

If you were a pastor of a church and you came to me with your deacons or elder board because your church was in shambles, everyone was arguing, and your congregation was confused, and you said, "Tony Evans, help us," I would open the very same Bible that I used to help the individual and the family, and I would identify the cause for the chaos based on the Word of God, seeking to prescribe biblical solutions for the calamity in your church.

In other words, Scripture would not only solve the individual and family divisions, but it would also solve the ecclesiastical confusion. This is because Scripture holds the final and authoritative answer on all of life's concerns. In fact, every question facing us today has two answers: God's answer and everyone else's. And when those two differ, everyone else is wrong.

Yet where do we often go for answers as a nation when there is chaos in our country? Where do we turn for solutions when we are experiencing moral, social, and economic decline at a rate that is able to destroy our country before our youngest generation even has a chance to grow up? What do we do when divisions, debt, and our own internal protests across our land threaten what little stability we have left?

What most Christians do, unfortunately, is change books. When it comes to politics and elections, far too many Christians spend more time appealing to family, his-

tory and tradition, culture, racial expediency, and personal preference than they do to what the Bible teaches. While Scripture is good enough for individuals, families, and churches, it seems that somehow it has been deemed insufficient for how we respond to politics and government.

Yet the same book that can restore a person, home, or church is the very same book that can restore and transform our nation. Friend, we don't need to change books. In fact, it is precisely because we have changed books that the chaos in our country has gotten worse than ever before.

GOD IS IN CHARGE,
AND ALONE SITS AS THE ULTIMATE
GOVERNMENT OVER HIS CREATION.

It astounds me that in all of the talk permeating the airwaves, around watercoolers, over dinners, and among Christian friends concerning the elections, candidates, parties, and platforms—how little a *biblically based* theistic worldview seems to enter the equation. God may get dropped in here or there on one issue, or perhaps two. But that is not good enough. Unless God and His revealed

Word is the overarching influencer and rationale over how our electoral decisions are made as believers, then we cannot expect God to be the overarching influencer in our nation. Nor can we expect God to pour out His blessings on us as a country when He has been similarly marginalized, and at times even dismissed, from the equation.

GOD RULES

My fellow believers, it is time to return to the Book. It is time to look to the one source that holds the answers for how our country should operate, the Bible. And to do so, I want to start with the foundational principle upon which all else should rest concerning how a Christian should vote. This principle is located in the book of Romans where we read, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. *For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God*" (Romans 13:1, emphasis added).

God is in charge, and alone sits as the ultimate government over His creation. All other governments are then to reflect His ultimate rule. It is as straightforward, and as complex, as that. Scripture tells us clearly that there is no authority apart from God. Not only that, but we read that any governing authorities put in place have been established by God. Now that doesn't mean that the people filling the positions within the governing authorities are intentionally serving God or that their decisions are in line with God—because many, if not most, are not.

But the institution of governmental authority has been created, decreed, and established by God underneath His sovereign control.

For this reason, God cannot be removed from believers' involvement or representation in government because laws are made based on belief systems. Since the Christian's belief system or worldview is to be derived from the Bible, then out of necessity it should inform our politics and therefore should inform our vote.

A quick word on sovereignty before we move on because an accurate understanding of this principle is critical to formulating a believer's worldview on voting. Sovereignty simply means that God is accountable to no one. All things are either caused by Him or permitted by Him. To acknowledge His sovereignty means to recognize His jurisdiction, along with the validity of His supremacy, over every area of life (Psalm 103:19; Romns 11:36).

What humanism often does is offer an insufficient understanding of the sovereign purpose and work of God. These systems attempt to box God into a government confined within the perspective of man. Yet when humanity is used as the starting point for interpreting and interacting with God's creation, faulty theology and sociology emerge as mankind attempts to fashion God into the image of man. As a result, socialism and communism, in particular, use government to suppress religion to such a degree as to leave the one true God out entirely.

The other extreme are those civilizations which, in the name of their religion, create bondage. Many of these

"ecclesiocracies," and even so-called theocracies, in the Middle East and elsewhere allow people the opportunity to express their faith in the religion that the government has decreed as lawful—but that expression is mandated. That is not freedom. Rather, that is oppression.

Oppressive religious rule occurs when government-mandated civil religion is used to rule over people, frequently without the consent of the governed. It includes rule by mandate of an institutional religious hierarchy, and is often resisted by its subjects.

Yet God never forces obedience to His rule. As the supreme ruler, He has allowed the freedom to obey or disobey according to mankind's choices within the sovereign lines of His boundaries. The boundary lines of God's sovereignty are the non-negotiable areas He has established. It is similar to the boundary lines on a football field. In between the boundary lines on the football field, there is given the freedom to call the plays. Likewise, God has given mankind the freedom to make decisions on the field of life.

Of course, disobedient decisions will result in consequences that are oftentimes inherent in the very activity itself (Romans 1:18–32). But in His sovereignty, God has allowed mankind to serve as representatives within His governing systems, for good or for bad.

Keep in mind that God's sovereignty allows Him to even use that which is not cooperating with Him (the bad) in order to move things to where He wants them to go.

Yet while God is able to turn things around, that does

not mean that we are to intentionally disregard God's rule. Rather, as the originator of governing authorities and as the sovereign authority over all, what God has to say regarding culture, social order, and government supersedes all else and should be the basis upon which all of our decisions, as followers of Christ, are made. In other words, as a Christian, you cannot discuss government without discussing God. This is because government is a divinely ordained institution.

Problems arise when people adopt the institution of government but dismiss the divine Ruler over government. Many people want "God bless America" today. They just don't want "One nation under God." The issue is that you can't have one without the other.

God has given us the freedom to choose whether or not we will be one nation under Him—whether we will recognize His rule and operate underneath it. But with that choice comes either "God bless America," or not. God only promises to bless the nation that recognizes His authority (Psalm 33:12).

Freedom means you get to control the choice, but because God is the sovereign ruler over His creation you don't get to control the consequences. He will rule by either endorsing your choice, or He will rule by allowing you to have the consequences of a decision made against Him.

For example, those who favor the legality of abortion on demand are making a choice against God's law not to take an innocent human being's life. God has given people the freedom to disobey Him in making this choice antithetical

to what He says. And He has even given our government the freedom to issue a law that makes the murder of an unborn child legal in their system.

However, God's viewpoint on the wrongful exercise of this freedom by shedding innocent blood is given to us in the book of Genesis where we read, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). We also read in Proverbs that God hates "hands that shed innocent blood" (Proverbs 6:17). In Deuteronomy, God curses the one who "taketh reward to slay an innocent person" (Deuteronomy 27:25 KJV). And in Isaiah 49:1 and elsewhere in Scripture, we see God clearly recognizing the child while in the womb: "The LORD called Me from the womb; from the body of My mother He named me."

When the governing representatives of the people legalize the shedding of innocent blood (as a for-profit business, nonetheless) then they have placed themselves, and those they represent, in the direct line of God's judgment. An attack on the life of another is an attack on God Himself as humanity has been made in His image (Genesis 9:6).

As a result, there is a price tag for legalizing the shedding of innocent blood. The more unborn babies are murdered in our land, the more we can expect violence in our culture as well. Because when a culture goes against God's laws, God will allow that culture to experience the consequences of the breaking of that law—in this case the resultant devaluing of life as well as the effects of that devaluing.

The real issue at hand is how God is going to respond

to a culture when the majority of the people seek to veto Him. God has made it clear that He is the ultimate authority, and everyone else is the delegated authority, for good or for bad.

The Bible tells us that we are all "under God." We read in Psalms that "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). In Daniel, it says that "the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind" (Daniel 4:17) and that "it is Heaven that rules" (Daniel 4:26).

Scripture clearly distinguishes for us in these places and in many others that God's rule operates universally over every thing, every nation, every person, and every system, whether that be political, economic, educational, or familial. Yet while there is one ultimate Ruler, there are multiple rulers who have been put in place in order to rule. That is why Paul tells us to be in subjection to the governing authorities (Romans 13:1)—plural—as we read earlier in Romans.

**GOD ESTABLISHED THE FAMILY AS THE
FOUNDATION OF CIVILIZATION.**

The reason for the plurality in governing authorities is that the division of power provides the best environment for the fair dispersement of power underneath the ultimate ruler, God. Just like at the Tower of Babel, when mankind tried to unite in order to usurp or reach God's rulership in the heavens, God resisted their attempt at a centralized world power (Genesis 11:1–9).

It is in dividing up governing authorities that both checks and balances are put in place against evils arising within a sinful humanity such as tyranny and dictatorships. That is why our founding fathers separated the judicial from the legislative and also from the executive branches. Since God exists as both unity and diversity (Trinity), human government has been established to reflect that pattern by being unified in their purpose while being diversified in their spheres of responsibility. The division of power is the biblical and optimal way for maximizing God's position as the ultimate authority. Government cannot be all things to all people. Only God can be everything for the people. When the state seeks to adopt such a role, it is seeking to emulate God.

THE FOUR SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

Under God's rule, He has created governmental systems that consist of four distinct realms: individual, family, church, and civil government—each having specific, limited spheres of responsibility and jurisdiction. Since God alone is the ultimate authority, no human govern-

ment can be. The first governmental system is also the most important of all four. This is because if this form of government is out of place, then the other three will reflect it. Likewise, if this form of government is functioning properly, the other three will reflect that as well.

The first and foundational form of government instituted by God is *self-government*.¹ The goal of self-government is to govern oneself according to the principles and precepts found in God's law. When individuals are living life in light of an attitude of self-government, then there is less of a need for anyone or anything else to govern them. In Ecclesiastes, God makes it clear what the fundamental piece of self-government entails, and that is the fear of Him. We read,

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: Fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

The next type of government that God prescribes in Scripture is *family government*. God established the family as the foundation of civilization (Genesis 1:26–28). The Bible tells us that Christ is the head of the husband (Ephesians 5:23), and the husband is the head of the wife (1 Corinthians 11:3), and that parents are the head over their children (Ephesians 6:1). Scripture goes on to lay out the governing principles in relation to the marriage covenant

and family unit. The saga of the nation is the saga of its families written large.

Along with individual and family government, God has also ordained *church government*. The church leaders, as members of the *ecclesia* (the governing body set up by Jesus Christ on His behalf), are to govern matters that apply to the church and/or church members, and serve as the moral conscience of the government. This role is crucial since the progress of a nation is directly related to the state of its morality (Proverbs 14:34).

The fourth system of government instituted by God in His kingdom rule on earth is *civil government*. Civil government is that system that has been set in place to create and maintain a righteous and just environment in which freedom can flourish. It is a representative system designed to manage society in an orderly fashion. Yet it is to do so without interfering with, negating, or contradicting God's other governing agencies. Civil government is to support, not replace, the institutions of family and church government so that self-government, and therefore maximum freedom, can be experienced.

Paul emphasizes the primary purpose of civil government in the continuation of his discussion in Romans 13 when he says,

Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God: and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.

In this verse, Paul introduces us to the one overarching job of civil government that can be defined as follows: *Under God, the government is to promote the conditions for the well-being of the citizenry for good, while protecting the citizenry against the proliferation of evil.* And since civil government is to operate under God, He—and not man—must be the ultimate standard of what is good or evil. This means that politics is fundamentally an ethical enterprise based on what is right and what is wrong. Therefore Christian voting should first and foremost be a spiritual issue.

When the government successfully keeps evil in check, good can flourish. This holds true whether it means keeping the evil out that shows up in our enemies around the world, or whether it means keeping people from knocking down your front door. Government is to restrict the flow of evil while simultaneously and intentionally seeking to expand the flow of good. Everything within civil government ought to be aimed at this one primary goal.

Paul explains,

Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; *for it is a minister of God to you for good.* But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, *an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*

(Romans 13:3, 4, emphasis added).

When civil government attempts to do more than that, it typically ends up infringing on other divinely authorized governments (individual, family, and/or church). When the government tries to act as someone's parent and pay someone's bills while they do not work, the government has become more than the government was designed to be. The Bible says if a man does not work, he ought not to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:6–8, 10). It is not talking about when a man cannot work. It is talking about when a man won't work. If a man does not work, you do not offer him a welfare check to pay him for his irresponsibility. You don't look to the government to pay for laziness while taxing others to cover the bill.

Just as God restricts the church from giving charity to people prior to getting the family involved first (1 Timothy 5:4), likewise civil government is not to provide charity prior to the involvement of the family, church, and other local charitable entities. This is so because help is to be given by those closest related to the need who can provide both love and accountability that promotes personal freedom and responsibility. What government can do to make this happen is to create an environment for compassion to flourish. That falls underneath its task of promoting good. When this order is reversed, then the state becomes an all-encompassing promoter of federal economic dependency leading to illegitimate and irresponsible personal and corporate welfare. Limited government, however, does not mean noncaring and incompassionate government. Civil government should provide a safety net specifically and

intentionally designed to produce self-sufficiency and not long-term dependency.

Such government assistance for able-bodied citizens should be temporary and not designed to produce long-term dependency and an entitlement mentality. In addition, there should be accountability tied to the assistance so that the person receiving the assistance has to perform some sort of work or volunteerism that is connected to what they receive. For example, if a parent receives funding assistance for their children's breakfasts and lunches at schools then that parent should also be required to volunteer for a certain number of hours at that school.

When civil government is limited to its primary role, it maintains an environment for God's other governments to flourish, yet it does not overextend itself and those underneath it while trying to be everything to everybody while still charging taxpayers for things it does not have divine authorization to do. An overextended civil government and overtaxed citizenry limits the freedoms of individuals to pursue their calling under God, and their capacity to contribute to economic development. It also creates an environment of restriction, doubt, and hesitation, thus stifling opportunity, initiative, and ingenuity.

The primary intended outcome of a properly functioning civil government, rather, promotes a concept we often throw around lightly in our nation today—that of freedom. It is quite possible that our freedoms are often so undervalued because we have never had to experience a life without them, like so many others around the world.

It is also possible that this is because we have defined freedom wrongly. Freedom can be defined as a *release from illegitimate bondage in order to make the choice to exercise responsibility in actualizing and maximizing all that you were created to be.*

The first occurrence of this concept of freedom happens in the book of Genesis in the garden of Eden when God created mankind. We read, "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat *freely*'" (Genesis 2:16, emphasis added). Notice that God is referenced here as "LORD God." Normally when you read the word LORD, it refers to the personal name used for God, which is *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* literally means "master, and absolute ruler."² It is the name God uses to reveal Himself to mankind regarding His relationship with us. The name *Yahweh* reveals God's rule in the context of His relationship with humanity.

Thus as the Ruler over Adam and Eve, God clearly delineated the boundaries of His governmental system. Whichever tree Adam or Eve wanted to eat from, they were free to eat, except one: "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

Notice that in the garden under God's governing rule and original blueprint for mankind, there was *maximum freedom*. From every tree in the garden, except for one, Adam and Eve had complete and unhindered freedom to partake. This freedom also included the responsibility to manage, develop, and expand the assets God had provided them, which is the essence of free enterprise.

Yet in the context of this broad-based freedom, God also legislated strictly defined boundaries that came with serious repercussions. If anyone chose to go against the boundaries God had set up, the result would be not only dire but also immediate. While people had the freedom to choose to do wrong, they could not choose to do so without suffering severe and clearly defined consequences.

In the beginning, God was the government. His model allowed for broad freedom along with narrow restrictions, followed up with both quick and severe consequences for breaking those restrictions. Yet after the fall of mankind, God transferred the carrying out of the government of mankind to men. God had set the standard for how His creation should operate and then transferred that standard of government to mankind after sin entered the world. To the degree that civil government restricts evil, mankind can experience the freedom God originally intended.

Therefore, a government patterned off of the original design of the Creator is a government that does not seek to limit humanity's freedoms, but rather promotes freedom through the declaration of clear, broad, and just boundaries along with the carrying out of immediate and acute consequences for breaking those boundaries. It is in this type of government that individuals, families, churches, and local communities are best equipped to cultivate and maintain high levels of both productivity and enjoyment so that free enterprise can flourish.

**BIBLICAL JUSTICE AIMS TO PROTECT
INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY WHILE
PROMOTING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.**

While the founding fathers fought for freedom for themselves in establishing America, most were unwilling to give it to others as demonstrated by the evil of American slavery. Yet freedom is so important that we must be involved not only in fighting for it for ourselves, but also in empowering others to experience it as well. This is why the greatest demonstration of our value and appreciation for freedom is realized in diligently serving the well-being of others (Galatians 5:13). Freedom's purest form is manifested through expanding and enriching the freedom of others.

Civil government is authorized to protect and promote this freedom through maintaining what is often called, in our contemporary culture, *social justice*. However, social justice has become a convoluted term, conjuring up different meanings depending on who is speaking. It is frequently used these days as a catchphrase for illegitimate forms of government promoting the redistribution of wealth, rather than for the redistribution of opportunity where illegitimate impediments are removed, thus giving individuals the chance to maximize their potential. Likewise, social justice often favors the collectivistic

expansion of civil government, which wrongly infringes on the jurisdictions of God's other covenantal institutions (family and church).

The term I choose to use instead when speaking about the government's responsibility to create an environment of justice in society is *biblical justice*, since biblical justice aims to protect individual liberty while promoting personal responsibility (Romans 14:12; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:11–15). Biblical justice provides society with a divine frame of reference from which to operate using Scripture as the defining template for how it is to function.³

The word *justice* in Scripture simply means to prescribe the right way. Since God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4) and is the ultimate lawgiver (James 4:12), His laws and judgments are just and righteous (Psalms 19:7–9; 111:7–8). They are to be applied without partiality (Deuteronomy 1:17; Leviticus 19:15; Numbers 15:16) because justice identifies the moral standard by which God measures human conduct (Isaiah 26:7). It is the government's role, then, to be God's instrument of divine justice by impartially establishing, reflecting, and applying His divine standards of justice in society (Psalm 72:1–2, 4; 2 Samuel 8:15; Deuteronomy 4:7–8)—regardless of one's economic status (Exodus 23:3, 6; Leviticus 19:15).

Biblical justice, therefore, can be defined as *the equitable and impartial application of the rule of God's moral law in society*. The one constant factor that government is to guarantee in the areas of economic, political, social, or criminal justice is the understanding and application of an established

moral law within the social realm.

Civil government exists, therefore, to promote personal and collective freedom through resisting evil and overseeing the proliferation of good through maintaining a just society. When a government fails to do this either because it runs inefficiently or ineffectively, it is typically the masses who suffer as a result.

That is why it is essential for the masses, particularly the masses who align themselves underneath Jesus Christ, to vote according to the principles and values of the kingdom of God. While this does not mean we all vote the same way, it does mean that we are unified in utilizing the same principles when we vote. Ultimately, this determines how God as Sovereign Ruler will relate to and work through those within and under the government and its systems. This is because God oftentimes relates to us based on how His representatives relate to Him.

For example, in the governmental institution of the family, a large part of how God relates to, blesses, or does not bless a family has to do with the male leader who has been assigned to cover the family. If the man is not in alignment under Jesus Christ and is himself not covered by God's care, protection, and favor, then the family will experience the consequences of this disorder.

In the book of 1 Peter, we read that a man who does not carry out his role well in relation to God's rule of love in accordance with leading his wife will have his prayers hindered (1 Peter 3:7). If his prayers are hindered, then those under his care and covering will not be the recipi-

ents of all of the blessing and favor that could be theirs as a result of their leader seeking God's face on their behalf.

Likewise, how God's representatives in civil government relate to Him frequently affects how He relates collectively to those underneath their leadership. Because this is so, it is even more important that you and I as believers make our voting decisions based on what and who best reflects God's kingdom rule (1 Samuel 8:18).

THE KINGDOM AGENDA

Every voting choice you exercise ought to be for the candidate, platform, party, or policy that will best represent the values of the kingdom of God. The answer to how a Christian should vote is as simple, and as complicated, as that. I say that it is as complicated as that because no solitary party—Democrat, Republican, or Libertarian—fully reflects the values of the kingdom of God.

On a number of issues, the Democrats represent the values of the kingdom of God. And then on a number of other issues, the Democrats are antithetical to God's kingdom laws. Similarly, on a number of issues, the Republicans reflect the values of the kingdom of God. But then again, on other issues, they do not.

As a Christian, your responsibility when you cast your vote will be to understand the principles of God's kingdom and His values, and then compare these with the content and character of whatever person, party, platform, or policy for which you will cast your vote.

When you understand the values of God's kingdom, you will best understand His agenda.⁴ However, it is my conviction that the message of the kingdom, and the values therein, are sorely lacking in understanding today. As a result, this has caused much, if not most, of the confusion in our land. Not because people don't speak of the kingdom, but because far too much of their speech is in esoteric, theological "code words" that seem unrelated to the realities of life in the here and now.

The absence of a comprehensive understanding of the kingdom has led to deterioration in our world of cosmic proportions. People live segmented, compartmentalized lives because they lack a kingdom worldview. Families disintegrate because they exist for their own fulfillment rather than for the kingdom.

Churches are having a limited impact on society because they fail to understand that the goal of the church is not the church itself but the kingdom. This myopic perspective keeps the church divided, ingrown, and unable to transform the cultural landscape in any significant way.

And because this is so, society at large has nowhere to turn to find solid solutions to the perplexing challenges that confront us today—troubling problems such as crime, racism, poverty, and a myriad of other ills that continue to show up in our politics and policies year after year. Yet for each and every issue, God's kingdom agenda provides an alternative, another way to see and live life in this world. It transcends the politics of men and offers the solutions of heaven.

I like to think of the kingdom of God as the *alternative*, because that word in particular states that there is another way, another idea on the floor. As God's people, we are not limited by the choices this world offers us. God has an alternative plan for us—His kingdom.

Throughout the Bible, the kingdom of God is His rule, His plan, and His program. God's kingdom is all-embracing. It covers everything in the universe. In fact, we can define God's kingdom as His comprehensive rule over all creation.

Now if God's kingdom is comprehensive, so is His kingdom agenda. The kingdom agenda, then, may be defined as *the visible demonstration of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life*.

The reason so many believers are struggling is that we have voted in the past asking God to bless our plans rather than casting our votes based on seeking His agenda. We want God to sign off on our decisions rather than us following His.

But it doesn't work that way. God has only one plan, one alternative, and it is to advance His kingdom. We need to find out what that looks like so we can make sure that we are voting for God's plan, and not ours.

The Greek word the Bible uses for kingdom is *basileia*, which basically means a "rule" or "authority." Included in this definition is the idea of power. So when we talk about a kingdom, we're talking first about a king, and a ruler who has power.

Now if there's a ruler, there also have to be "rulees," or

kingdom subjects. A kingdom also includes a realm: that is, a sphere over which the king rules. Finally, if you're going to have a ruler, rules, and a realm, you also need kingdom regulations—guidelines that govern the relationship between the ruler and the subjects. These are necessary so the rules will know whether they are doing what the ruler wants done.

God's kingdom includes all of these elements. He is the absolute Ruler of His domain, which encompasses all of creation. And His authority is total. Everything God rules, He runs—even when it doesn't look like He's running it. Even when life looks like it's out of control, God is running its "out-of-controlness." At the heart of the kingdom agenda philosophy is the fact that there should never be a separation between the sacred and the secular. All of life is spiritual, since all of life is to come under God's rule. Therefore, every issue—whether social, political, economic, educational, environmental, or otherwise—is to mirror God's principles related to the specific area and thus reflect and promote His agenda in history.

God has made Jesus Christ the Sovereign over all mankind's kingdoms (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:13–18). His rule is to be represented in history by those who are a part of His kingdom and who have been delegated the responsibility of dispensing His rule to the nations (Matthew 28:19, Ephesians 1:22, 23). Christian voting should reflect this reality.

Colossians 1:13 says that everybody who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior has been transferred from

the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, your allegiance has been changed. You are no longer to follow the world's ways, but Christ's.

And just in case there's any doubt, there are no in-between kingdoms. There are only two realms in creation: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. You are subject to one or the other. And as a believer, you are to be subject to Jesus Christ in His kingdom. This means you belong to another realm, your allegiance is in another order, and no matter where you live, work, travel, or vote, you are a citizen of God's kingdom.

A story is told about a man who needed to get his shoe repaired. He rushed to the shoe repair shop only to arrive there at exactly 5:00 p.m. Scanning the parking lot, he noticed that it was empty, indicating that, apparently, there was no one around. Knowing he wouldn't have another opportunity to go to the shop for some time, he headed to the door to see if, by chance, it was still open.

To his surprise, the shoe repairman was there.

"I didn't think anyone was here," the man said, relieved.

"You came just in time," the shoe repairman replied. "I was almost ready to go home."

Remembering the empty parking lot, the man asked, "How are you going to go home? I didn't see any cars."

"Oh, that's easy," the repairman said. "Do you see those stairs over there?"

He pointed to the corner of the shop. The man looked and noticed the stairs. He nodded.

"I live up there," the shoe repairman said. "I just work down here."

WE LIVE UP THERE

You and I, as brothers and sisters in Christ, live up there too. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20a). That is our home. That is the kingdom to which we belong. We just work down here. Understanding this key spiritual truth is fundamental to all we do, and how we vote, on earth.

The kingdoms of this world would have us forget where our home is and lead us to believe that where we work is also where we live. But we, as members of the body of Christ, get our instructions and directions from another realm—from another King who is heading up another kingdom.

To walk into a voting booth and simply pull a lever because that is what your friends do, that is what your family does, or that is how you have always voted will be to neglect one of the greatest responsibilities you have, which is to cast a vote for the values of the kingdom of God.

Rather, your vote ought to be determined by an intentional knowledge of God's kingdom purposes on earth, combined with a thorough understanding of the issue or candidate at hand.

Then you will not only cast your votes for the betterment of your country, but you will also cast your votes for the advancement of God's kingdom.