

POLITICS AND THE BIBLE

- The Bible seldom addresses "secular" political issues directly.
- What it does say is often unpopular. (1 Peter)
- There are Kingdom principles that have broad implications to all relationships.

Matthew 22:21

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

Observation #1 *God's people have obligations to the state.*

Observation #2 *Even the secular state is a tool of God's providence. (O.T. Rom.13)*

Observation #3 *In America the government is of and by the people which means that our duty to Caesar includes more than paying tax.*

Observation #4 *Christian alien ambassadors have dual 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"

TWO TRAGIC SOCIAL VALUES MUST BE RESISTED.

1. People in **low places** who **play the victim card.**
2. People in **high places** who **protect their turf.**

THE TRUTH ABOUT VICTIMS



1.
People who see themselves as victims seldom get better.
2.
We all are victims of something.
3.
There are those who have a selfish interest in keeping victimization alive.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TURF PROTECTORS



1.
The rich and powerful did not get there on their own.
2.
The sign of true power and wealth is in how it is used.
3.
Those in high places do well to associate with those who are not.
(Jesus for example)

TWO CHALLENGES

1.
People in **low places** need to **take ownership**.

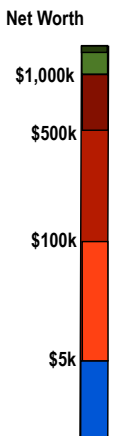


2.
People in **high places** need to **show compassion**.



Social economic classes in America

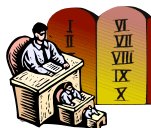
- **Upper Class** - Capitalists, 6%
 - **Super Rich** - stars, high end CEOs, etc. 1%
 - **Rich** - "successful" investors, business owners, etc.
- **Middle Class** - 75%
 - **Upper middle** - highly ed. professionals, 15%
 - **Lower middle** - college educated craftsman and lower level managers, 30%
 - **Clerical** - blue collar workers. 30%
- **Lower Class** - uneducated & unskilled, 19%
 - **Working poor** - entry level workers
 - **Underclass** - unemployed or marginally employed.



References: Gilbert, D. (2002) *The American Class Structure: In An Age of Growing Inequality*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth; Thompson, W. & Hickey, J. (2005). *Society in Focus*. Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon; Beeghley, L. (2004). *The Structure of Social Stratification in the United States*. Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.

Six key issues that will make a difference.

- The **education level** of the general population.
 - The support and health of the **traditional family**.
- The support and health of a **middle class**.
 - The support and health of a **growing economy**.
- A **safety net** for those who are truly needy.
 - The **spirit of democratic capitalism**.



A socialist society

is willing to sacrifice individual liberty and material productivity for material and social equality.

A capitalist society

is willing to sacrifice material and social equality for individual liberty and material productivity.

A Christian society

views liberty and productivity as a responsibility more than a right - and compassion, cooperation, and justice as important as competition.

Christians can "do good" in both capitalist and socialist societies.

Christian capitalists

Competition that is fair

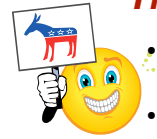
It is motivated by the pursuit of efficiency, and effectiveness as stewards more than personal comfort and power as consumers.

Cooperation that is proactive

It is sensitive to the well-being of the community as well as the family and the individual.

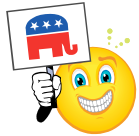
Compassion that is sacrificial

It is free to be generous and sensitive in addressing the true needs of others, especially those without power or dignity.



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. **Salvation = more money.**
- Promote the Kingdom without the King. **Ethics is about saving bodies more than souls.**
- Promote community apart from the Spirit of Christ. **Poverty is strictly a material 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.**
- Wealth is not created it is divided. **As the rich get richer it is always at the expense of the poor.**



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 interests.**
- Promote the King without the Kingdom. **Righteousness is not about rights.**
- Promote individualism, autonomy, and privacy apart from self-sacrificing service to others. **We each get what we deserve.**
- 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.**
- Wealth is created. **The fact that some get rich has little or no negative effect on those who do not.**

A strategy for addressing poverty

- **Respect and dignity.** Focus attention on restoring and preserving personal dignity not just giving money.
- **Bipartisan.** Both the political right and left need to do more listening, less competing, and refocus on public service.
- **The family.** Promote and support the traditional marriage and family.
- **The economy.** Promote and support a growing economy.
- **Education.** Provide and encourage the education of all citizens.
- **Tax reform.** Move toward a "Flat tax" or a "Consumption tax."

International strategies

- **Civil rights.** Promoting the rights of women and children in third world countries would make a big difference.
- **Sanitation.** Clean water is perhaps the single biggest and solvable problem in the third world.
- **Capitalism.** Developing fair and free markets has proven to be the single best mechanism for creating wealth.
- **Representative and responsible government.** Corrupt government is a mammoth problem in the third world.
- **Emergency aid.** Prompt, generous, well directed aid from wealthy countries is needed to meet temporal crises.