

## SESSION 2: THE GREAT REQUIREMENT

Resource Recommendation Time:

- David Platt – Secret Church 20. God, Government, & The Gospel. Also his new book “Before you vote.”
- Timothy Keller article in the NY Times – “How do Christians fit into the 2 party system? They Don’t”

I definitely benefited from these two in preparation for this evening. Ok, Micah 6.8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6.8

As I said at the outset session 1 was about our identity and session 2 is about our calling. How do we, as citizens of heaven whom God has allowed to remain as citizens of our country...or citizens of any country (I’m told each weekend people watch our services from about 14 countries right now and I believe everything we are saying would apply to any Christian in any nation).

I’m calling this session the great requirement. We have the great commandment in Matthew 22 – Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, & mind. Second is like it – Love your neighbor as yourself. Great Commission in Matthew 28 – Go to all nations and make disciples. Well, Micah 6.8 poses the question – what does the Lord require of us? What is good to

do. And it says three things that I believe are wonderful categories for how you engage any area of life. And tonight we will look at how this requirement...this calling on our lives...works out in your political allegiances and more importantly in the context of your everyday life.

When it comes to politics...what does it mean for us to DO Justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

### Great Requirement: Do Justice

It is your calling by God as a Christ follower to bring God’s justice to bear on the earth. This informs both your individual activity and your political engagement. So let’s talk about justice.

**God is a God of justice. *But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.*** (Isaiah 5:16)

### Jesus is the promised messiah of Justice.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. the zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6–7)

God appoints government for the purpose of carrying out justice & calls us to submit to that justice. And here is where 1

Peter 2 really helps us out. We as Christians are to submit to these authorities.

**Government is to be God's earthly instrument of justice**

13 Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority 14 or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. 15 For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. 16 Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor. -- 1 Peter 2:13-17 (CSB)

Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. 2 So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. 4 For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. 5 Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. 6 And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. 7 Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor. -- Romans 13:1-7 (CSB)

We are called to submit to these human authorities placed over us. To HONOR Them. And can I tell you something right here? When this was written...the emperor was most likely NERO! NERO! Ya'll I don't know what you think about our political leaders right now...but nobody is even on the same planet as NERO. He was killing and burning Christians for sport. And STILL Peter said Fear God, Honor the emperor. Paul will say 1 Timothy 2 PRAY for those in leadership.

You see in verse 14 of 1 Peter 2 that a very simple explanation of how a Government does justice is by promoting good and punishing evil. This starts back in our belief that all people are created in the image of God. It is that belief that serves as a compass to guide us toward justice in the communities God puts us in. The most basic responsibility of government, delegated to it by God, is to do justice by promoting good and punishing evil.

- To protect people's freedom to worship and promote the good of family
- To affirm equality and fuel prosperity
- To help the poor and support the oppressed.

The bible talks about justice as **fair process for all people**

*You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you. (Deuteronomy 16:19-20)*

The bible talks about justice as **fair opportunity for all people**  
*May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!* (Psalm 72:4)

Now you have to remember sin right? Which means every single system of government is going to privilege some people over others. It's a flawed system built by flawed people. So as Christians one of our roles in doing justice is seeking to do good. That's verse 15 back in 1 Peter 2. In fact doing good is even how we silence our critics. We honor everyone.

**So in a sinful fallen world with sinful fallen governments how do we "do justice?"**

**1. To do justice requires first living a just life yourself.**

- **Live with integrity** - *Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.* (Proverbs 10:9)
- **Strive for justice in your personal life.** 1 Peter 2.15. There is no such thing as passive justice. And this one is hard. Because I have the option to pass by the person hurting on the side of the road. I have the option to ignore the pockets of hurting in the community. But that's not what my God did. And if I get hot and bothered about how candidates are going to do justice but I, as a follower of Christ, walk on the other side of the road and pass by the hurting...I'm not honoring the Lord. Seek ways to love those hurting around you. Pay your taxes. Be the best citizen you can be! Work for the poor and oppressed. And when you see injustice speak up & act.
- if you are going to actively try to do good...you will be political. In fact you already are political. We all are!

Because we are all seeking to influence the world by bringing the kingdom of heaven to bear in our world. **In fact I would argue it is biblically unfaithful to disengage entirely from the political process.** It is unloving towards our neighbors and disobedient to God. Again remember politics is influencing. It happens at every level. And we as God's ambassadors have the chance to influence by shining a bright light on the gospel through our actions.

**"In the midst of blatant injustices incited upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, 'those are social issues with which the Gospel has no real concern.'" – Martin Luther King, Jr.**

We are called to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. And that comes with action. It must be in word, but it comes in action too. WHICH MEANS – like we said earlier...we will never be at home in any one political party. Our agenda is set by King Jesus. Jim Crow was an affront to Human Dignity. And Dr. King is saying hey...what happened churches? Are you out spiritualizing God himself? The gospel is good news to a community not just to an individual. Faith without works is dead.

**Strive for justice in your political positions.**

Vote for just policies and candidates

- Evaluate personal character, evaluate professional judgment, political ideology, cultural direction, and especially their ultimate commitments. All people have them, nobody can set them aside. Look at how their ultimate commitments are shaping their view of justice.

Let me pause right here and give you something that I hope will be helpful in discerning the difference between what God has clearly commanded and what falls into the area of wisdom. Comes from Jonathan Leeman at 9 marks, also saw it in David Platt’s secret church. Seems its catching on but I believe Leeman is original author. and I think its wonderful.

God’s Word <----->	Our Wisdom
“Rules of the Game”	“Strategy for the game”
Biblically <u>mandated</u>	Biblically <u>informed</u>
Direct, straight line to positions and policies	Indirect, jagged line to positions and policies
Binding on a Christian’s conscience— “must do”	Freedom in a Christian’s conscience— “can do”
Clear and unchanging across cultures and times	Complex calculations in various cultures at various times
Firm Grip / <u>Closed</u> Hand	Loose Grip / <u>Open</u> Hand

What we need to see when it comes to doing justice via political influence...<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Borrowing primary & secondary from Platt’s secret church.

- Primary political positions and secondary political positions. Primary ones are things that are so clearly mandated in scripture and essential to faithfully following Jesus that you must hold them. And the church should speak clearly about. Few Examples I think I see from scripture where Christians can hold close handed
  - Human Dignity – **Act 1.**
  - Marriage & Family – God created it as building blocks of society **Act 1**
  - Freedom to worship – **Act 1-4.** God has called all people to worship him. Government shouldn’t establish religion or eliminate it. Government should allow the exercise of it.
  - Some easy examples in recent history – Slavery, Nazi Party, Abortion, White Supremacy
- Secondary positions – things that are not essential to the integrity of Christian faith & practice. We can disagree over political positions that are not clearly marked out in scripture and still be faithful brothers and sisters in the same church.
  - Healthcare; Tax structures; use of military; environment;
  - I’m not saying these things are unimportant, I’m saying that while scripture might speak in general about these it does not give clear teaching that we should divide over. So Jesus loving Christians might find themselves on different sides of the aisle in terms of the solution. That’s ok. I believe the BULK of policy

discussions are here. I really do. Which is why I'm not listing off for you the "Christian Position" on every issue. More on that in a minute.

- And one of the biggest errors I believe Christians make is not distinguishing between biblical mandate and biblical wisdom. Where God's word speaks clearly we should stand firmly. But we should have flexibility regarding issues of wisdom. Gonna talk about this wisdom more in just a second so let's keep going

### **The Great Requirement: Love Kindness**

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:5-6)

So love your neighbor. Matthew 22 – Great commandment. Listen this means that your neighbors *needs* are usually more important than your *rights*.

Let me talk to your keyboard for a second. Is your tone gracious towards all people? Are the thoughts that are forming those words gracious? Are you demonizing people God loves?

Are you fair & thoughtful in your assessment of political platforms? Platforms are proposed solutions based in certain philosophies about how government should be run which, as we've said, have their roots in ultimate commitments. So

before you scream conservative or liberal – do you know what you mean by that? And if you do...ok good, but still why are you screaming?

Some translations of Micah 6.8 read "love mercy" or "love faithful action." In other words, there is an activeness to this kindness. It is both word and deed. Are you kind towards others?

Church – We need to demonstrate kindness in a very loud and clear way right now. Seems kindness and charity has faded from the public discourse. Please don't let cable news determine your tone more than scripture does. If you sound more like Maddow or Hannity than you do Jesus, you have a problem. Probably means you are spending more time with them than with Jesus. I'm pretty convinced the best thing we could all do is cancel our cable subscriptions. But I am serious that the church needs to lead in kindness.

Because our testimony of the gospel is MORE IMPORTANT than our political positions. We cannot sacrifice the former for the later. Especially Unity in the church...this is so important Christ died for it. Are you kind towards brothers and sisters you disagree with politically? Do you know any? Listen because politics is about influencing policy and because policy affects us differently depending on our situations...the best way to learn to be kind is to diversify your community. Diversify across political lines, racial lines, generational lines. And in conversation work to show kindness. Not aw shucks niceness. Extend a genuine listening ear and learn to

appreciate differences and try to address disagreements in LOVE.

YOU WILL NOT FIND THAT in the public square right now. We can model it here though.

Which is coupled with the last part of the great requirement so let's go there.

### **The Great Requirement: Walk Humbly with Your God**

12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive -- Colossians 3:12-13 (CSB)

I think it is worth us pausing and noting that humility is one of the things the Lord calls us to here in Micah 6.8. It's a very telling word to us isn't it? Especially in the arena of politics...humility can be a scarce resource. Walk Humbly...WITH YOUR GOD.

So let me break down what I think that means for you:

Walk humbly In your approach to politics and party.

- Most any political party has strengths and weaknesses.
- Most any political party has idolatrous trajectories.
- No political parties have a justice monopoly.

- Sometimes, God's Word may lead you to some surprising alliances if you are humble enough to see it.
- Other times, God's Word may lead you to stand alone in your posture before God and others.
- Acknowledge grace from God in your life &. Celebrate grace from God in others' lives.
- Acknowledge and celebrate their motives & gifts. ESPECIALLY when their views are different than yours.

A serious caution in our speech . . .

- "You can't be a Christian and vote for . . ."
- "You can't be a Christian and support . . ."
- "You can't be a Christian and think . . ."

See you are going to encounter impossible choices this election. parties in general, and in America in particular, try to sell you a packaged deal. You have to accept this set of platform positions to be a democrat or a republican. And they run CONSTANT propaganda on cable news. But that doesn't work for the thoughtful Christian. Because God's word, not a party, determines our stance on any issue. Am I saying you shouldn't register as a republican or as a democrat? Not saying that...just saying you shouldn't feel fully at home there.

In short friends – let me share a word from a friend, Sharon Hodde Miller, who is just good with words. "Don't yoke yourself with worldly things. Don't defend to the end the very brokenness Jesus came to die for. Don't trade your credibility for earthly power. Whatever point you are trying to make, whatever fight you are trying to win, its not worth your witness in the world. When this is all over and the dust clears

away the world will remember. It will remember how we conducted ourselves and who we stood for, so let's be people who stand for Jesus. Honor him, reflect him. Be a holy compass for a lost and dying world. Let that be our legacy."

An age old guiding principle for christians as we engage politics together. . .

In essentials, unity.

In non-essentials, liberty .

In all things, charity.

Lastly Micah says walk **humbly with your God**. You may find there are a lot of do's and don'ts tonight. I hope not too many but if living as a christian and figuring out what to do with this election feels overwhelming I can't encourage you enough to remember the spirit of God is with you. You don't walk humbly alone. You walk with your God. And he will walk with you.

A great promise of the gospel is that God has sent his holy spirit to guide you. Are you spending time with him? I'm talking like extended focused time with him each day in his word and prayer. I'm talking about being aware of his presence in the moment to moment. Praying on the spot. Asking for his wisdom and his peace. You've got until November 3<sup>rd</sup>...Don't let the first time you talk to God about your vote be as you walk into the booth. Or however you will vote. Take it to God.

when I summarize tonight to say you should vote and everyone you vote for is going to disappoint in some way you are like...MAN!! SOUNDS LIKE LOSE-LOSE. If your hope is in

them...yes. Instead we approach our political decisions just as we should any decisions:

- Pray
- Seek Wisdom from God's word & God's people.
- Act as you feel convicted
- Pray – Commit your action to the Lord. Repent for where you may have erred. And then walk forward humbly with your God.

God's love is not at stake in this election. Jesus is not on the ballot. Last time he was we voted for Barabbas anyway. And yet he loved us still. He's got you. Get informed, Do justice. Love Kindness. And walk humbly with your God. Knowing you are a citizen of his kingdom first. And your first calling is to bring the hope of his gospel to bear this world.