

HOLY  
BIBLE

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BIBLE

# ONE NATION UNDER GOD

## INSIDE:

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- + Loving Despite  
Political Differences



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Ellis County Ministerial Alliance

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### **Editor's Note:**

With midterm elections quickly approaching, we asked our writers to address the following questions: What does God think about governance in civil society? What does the Bible say on this topic? How can Christians love one another despite political differences?

## ***Those Who Hold Differing Political Views Are Still Part of 'Us'***

### **Written by:**

**Brandon Nimz**

How can Christians love one another despite political differences? It depends on our perspectives as we ask the question. If our first thought or feeling involves thinking of "them" as a problem, or of "them" as "members of another faction" who "need to be loved," then it indicates worldly views (views that focus on our differences and separate us). These may supersede views that Christ wants us to have, and we may have even made our political views an idol over Christ and His teachings. In that case, we'll need to first get the log out of our eye to see clearly to help our fellow

believers with the speck in their eyes.

If our first thought is that it is hard to love those of "us" who look at the world so differently, then it indicates that the views Christ wants us to have are more likely at the forefront, and we're working through an application question that can be hard.

Is it that big of a deal to look at believers with differing views as "them" instead of looking at the situation as those of "us" who have differing views? The Pharisees and teachers of religious law differentiated between "us Pharisees and teachers of religious law" and "those sinners." They differentiated between "us men" and

"those women." They differentiated between "us Jews" and "those non-Jews or mixed-races," to name a few.

In each of these cases in which the Pharisees and teachers viewed a party as "other," Jesus gave counter-examples that showed the "us." It was the mixed-race Samaritan who was the hero of the parable and who loved his neighbor and is the example to us. Women were allowed to sit at Jesus's feet in the way that only male disciples could. The repentant tax collector was the person deemed justified by God and is the example for us over the Pharisee who came to pray about his accomplishments. Jesus illustrated this idea

## ***Those Who Hold Differing Political Views (Continued)***

when he touched and healed lepers who had been cast out of the "us," while He preached about all of us repenting and turning to God.

Jesus's teachings were universal, and His commands to love were universal. In addition to the passage in John 17, where Jesus prayed for all of us believers to become one, as He and the Father are one, the New Testament is filled with commands to be united in love and united in the Holy Spirit. We are to love even our enemies, much less believers who have different views from us.

Paul in Galatians 5 calls factions an act of the flesh, and John the disciple of Christ goes so far as to say, *"Anyone who claims to be in the light, but hates a believer is still in the darkness."*

So one of the first things we can do is to look at others as part of "us." Even if they are not "us" believers, they are at least "us sinners" or "us humans." Empathy and love can change radically with that small difference. If I hear in

the news, "They're throwing Uyghurs into concentration camps," it may affect my heart some, but it is distant. If I translate that in my head to "we're being thrown into concentration camps," it immediately impacts me more and makes me care and possibly intervene. The statement: "Democrats or Republicans believe in this awful concept" changes a lot when interpreted to "some of us Christians believe in this awful concept."

In addition to the idea of looking at others as part of "us" to help us love one another, we also are to give grace in the way we've been given grace by Christ. A screaming child in a store causes upset and can lead to judgments. A screaming child who has been burned in a store causes empathy and a desire to help. What changed--our understanding as to why the child was screaming. Giving others the benefit of the doubt and withholding judgment as to why they may be acting in a way we don't understand goes a long way towards allowing beneficial conversations and interactions to occur.

Lastly, while there are times seeking to get the log out of my brother's eye to help him may be an act of love, we also have to realize that in other circumstances some believers may permanently have a differing view on a subject and that God is ultimately the judge of that--not us. Paul addresses this well in Romans 14 when He gives examples of differing views among believers and tells us not to judge our fellow believers. He correctly notes that only God is the judge of our brothers and sisters--and of us.

Even if what "they" believe and propagate is sin, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew mentions that those of us who break the law and teach others to do so are the least IN the Kingdom, but that unless we follow the law better than the Pharisees and teachers of religious law, we won't enter the Kingdom at all.



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## ***‘The G Word’—We Can’t Afford NOT to Talk About It***

**Written by:**

**Anna Towns**

Today, as I write this article (a full day after it was due—sorry editors!), it is National Voter Registration Day. I am wearing a T-shirt quoting a popular former Supreme Court justice. I attended a fundraising event for a political candidate, and I monitored Facebook activity for an Ellis County political party for which I am secretary. To say that government and politics have an important role in my daily life might be an understatement—but I guarantee they do for you too.

A recent Netflix series starring Adam Conover of “Adam Ruins Everything” is titled simply, “The G Word.” That word, of course, is “government.” Recent Pew research shows that Americans trusting the government “always” or “most of the time” hasn’t risen above 30 percent for the last 25 years, and only 2 percent of us said we trust the government “just about always” in the most recent data. So it does seem like “government” is a bad word. You may have even

grown up hearing the old adage that one should never discuss religion or politics in polite company, but it is impossible not to and, I would argue, a disservice to our neighbors.

***‘While our opinions on politics and theology are as varied as our favorite potluck dishes, we Christians can find common ground in our membership in the priesthood of all believers.’***

As a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America (ELCA), I take guidance from and solace in our “Social Message on Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy.”

This 24-page document neatly sums up some important beliefs of Lutherans concerning governance, without having

to page through Martin Luther’s many musings on the topic. The document even has handy Bible verses as reference points—thanks, church!

As Lutherans, we understand that government is a gift from God, but like all human institutions, it can be used for good and evil—or most accurately, both in some combination.”

The document goes on to describe “God’s two ways of governing” through the metaphor of the two hands of God: the right hand, which guides through the Spirit, and the left hand, which guides through human activity. They are “distinct but interconnected” and accomplish God’s work in human society.

Two of my favorite quotes from the statement are these: “Lutherans adopt...a middle way confessing that government is of a fallen people, by a fallible people, but nonetheless intended by God as a blessing for all people,” and “although we may disagree about the best

## 'The G Word' (Continued)

ways to achieve the public good, we do not disagree about our shared responsibility to seek it."

As Christians, we are united in our struggle to see Christ in our neighbors and to be Christ's hands and feet in the world. Governing bodies at the city, county, state, and federal level impact our ability to do this and have real consequences for us and our siblings in Christ. As with anything we humans are involved in, due to our inherent sinfulness, there will always be problems. We can accept that government is imperfect, that politics are dirty, that there is too much money involved (a topic for another article), etc.—all while we continue to strive for perfection. As former President Barack Obama says in "The G Word's" last episode, we are "navigating that space between what the world

should be and the world as it is."

While our opinions on politics and theology are as varied as our favorite potluck dishes, we Christians can find common ground in our membership in the priesthood of all believers. We cannot shy away from the quagmire that is the American political system simply because it is messy and imperfect.

Those who cannot vote, for whatever reason, are dependent on those of us who can to make these decisions for them. When we choose "not to get all political," turn a blind eye to bad behavior because it will advance our preferred political party's agenda, or vote against the best interests of our neighbors for personal gain, we all pay a spiritual price. In a political environment that seems to be focused on dividing us, our unifying call is to rejoice

when government gets it right, to be critical and push for change when it does not, and to work for the mutual benefit of our neighbors and the public good.

I leave you with this final quote from "The G Word: Our government is powerful and democratic and caring and destructive and discriminatory and cruel. It's everything all at once, because we the people are all those things too. But a better world is possible, and on its best days our government is a tool that we can use to build that better world for ourselves and each other. Should we choose to."



*Anna Towns serves in many capacities as a lifelong member of Trinity Lutheran Church, ELCA, in Hays.*



**"It is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor." - George Washington**

## ***In the Best of Times and in the Worst of Times, People Pray***

**Written by:**

***Cheryl Glassman***

"The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity," John Adams.

*"He changes the times and the years...He gives wisdom to wise men and much learning to men of understanding," Daniel 2:21.*

God and the government. This topic is quite involved and inviting. It is inviting because we each have our own idea and ideals. As one person recently so eloquently put it, "You don't want ME writing about it!" God and politics has created a many boisterous and even highly divisive dinner conversation. So, then, do I quench my need to be heard regarding what I believe is true and correct? I think not; for as it says in Psalm 22:28, *"For kingship belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations."*

Over the course of the last few years, all nations of the world have experienced hardship. We were told by our government to stay in

our homes. Our own lives as we knew them were overthrown, so to speak, by a world pandemic. People died, and many others still bear the devastating remnants of the physical and mental suffering it caused.

Since then, our government has handed down decisions regarding very divisive topics. Many people were, and still are, angry--and political and personal opinion has created frustration. Some have allowed their political stance to become a wall toward others who don't see or believe as they do. Our world, our nation, even our towns, have gone through many challenges and changes over the course of time. Yet, through all the adversity, we must seek to remember we are all human. We are ALL made in the likeness of God. We are all his children. We may not and will not always agree or understand the thoughts and actions of others. It is in times like these we must seek God and remember He is always there waiting for us to pray, and to open our minds and hearts to the words we hear in Psalm 46:10, *"Be still and know*

*that I am God."*

I remember many terrible events that have occurred over the course of my own lifetime. The bombing in Oklahoma City; the tragedy of 9/11; the loss of troops or the effects on devoted servicemen and women overseas in battle; the tornado in Greensburg; floods; fires; school shootings.

These events were times of grief and anger, disbelief, and despair in our country. Yet, I remember one important and uplifting thing that happened. People prayed. People of all nationalities, backgrounds, and political beliefs came together and prayed. Some prayed for peace, for healing, for families, for victims. Some came and prayed and didn't know why -- they were drawn to join others in prayer. As powerful as events are, whether political or otherwise, they cannot take us from the most important thing of all--the unity we all share as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This past spring, I was honored to take part in planning and sharing in an event that speaks this

## ***In the Best of Times and in the Worst of Times (Continued)***

sentiment. The event was the National Day of Prayer. People from all walks of life and beliefs joined together at the Baptist church. We prayed for our government, our world, and for one another. It was uplifting and inspiring, and it helped me realize and reaffirm that God loves us all, no matter our political or personal beliefs, and our lives are

truly ultimately in God's hands.

So in essence, then, no matter what our political aspirations or beliefs, we are asked to look first and foremost to the God who loves and guides us. And, as it says in Ephesians 1:17-18 (the Gospel Acclamation for the Catholic Mass for the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary

Time 2023), "*May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call.*"



*Cheryl Glassman is the Director of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.*

## ***God Is the One Who Elevates Rulers and Sets Them Down***

***Written by:***

***Rev. Jonathan McCottry***

Today many are caught up with the challenge of getting into the mind of God with a human attempt to think in terms of the reasoning and the rationale of how God thinks. Adding politics to the equation creates more confusion because in many instances some want to suggest that there is a blue God, or a red God, or that God sits on the fence, and He leans in one direction or the other. This leaves us in a quandary, as we try to figure out where God is in the focus of politics and life.

Careful research into the

word of God clears up many issues involving political leadership and God's opinion. We only have God's word to direct us to His thought processes, but it is very clear that with a very simple delving into the pages of holy writ, we can clearly find a path that will lead us towards the thought process of God when it comes to human governance.

The Bible has much to say, and I believe that in this short discourse we will be able to not only uncover, but be able to dissect, truth. That truth will give us clear direction on where God is regarding politics and us being His children. Observe seven points to ponder.

**Point #1: Jesus supports civil leadership.**

Matthew 22:15-22 (KJV) simply reveals that the Pharisees and the Herodians were seeking to entrap Jesus as to his opinion of politics and the issues of political life. Our text reveals that Jesus identified their wickedness and hypocrisy. He realized that in their attempt to snare and to trap our Lord, the demonic plan of bringing about confusion was thwarted by understanding one simple fact: Caesar had an identity, and God had an identity. Where there is political law and spiritual law, there should not be confusion brought between these

## ***God Is the One Who Elevates Rulers (Continued)***

dimensions. Men and women have a responsibility to love God and be obedient to His commands and follow the dictates of humans under the laws that have been established by humans.

**Point #2: When there is conflict between spiritual law and political law, spiritual law must supersede political law.**

Acts 5:29 (KJV). Our second fundamental point can be made clearly by one of the most prominent disciples who suggests that when the laws of human beings come into conflict with the laws of God, that people should obey God first, and then human beings second.

**Point #3: Civil leadership had its genesis in the rejection of God and/or His appointed leaders.**

1 Samuel 8:1-7 (KJV). As Samuel became old and his sons became wayward, there was a desire of the leadership of the church to deviate away from the divine blueprint, God's governing process called the commandments.

Rather than to appoint

themselves under the direction of God's own choosing, God's people sought to be like other nations and refuse God's leadership and follow a point of human direction. It was this choice that brought grief to God and to Samuel because clearly it was an affront to the divine pattern laid out by God. Had the people followed God's leadership, there would have been no need for human leadership, and society would have been better off because God's rules are fair and without partiality.

This disobedience led to revolt, and revolt to apostasy, and apostasy moved the people into ways that are totally contrary to the laws of God or the will of God.

**Point #4: God ultimately is the one who elevates rulers and sets them down.**

Daniel 2:21 (KJV). Voting is a constitutional privilege in these United States. Even though there seems to be an ebb and flow of political maneuvering, which causes one side or the other to be elected, it is clearly divine origin that points us to the

reality that God is behind the play and counter-play of all the activity that is political in this society and in this world.

**Point #5: God expects full and total obedience from political and spiritual leaders equally without partiality.**

Malachi 2:1-12 (KJV).

**Point #6: God has established 10 principal covenants written in stone.**

James 2:8-13 (KJV). Loving one another comes as a result of being obedient to God's commands and us following His precepts.

**Point #7: God's covenants are a universal unifier.**

Romans 3:31 (KJV). As we all accept the universal standard, we find unity in common values because all of us will be united in belief.



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