

The Timeless Voice: For America's sake, build the Church

Commentary by Greg Baker

Of the unique powers of government, perhaps the most important is that of sovereign, the final authority. The sovereign is the one who at the end of the day owns the government and owns the nation in which the government serves. In the United States of America, this unique power rests with “We the People” – and if the people are to be successful as sovereign over this nation, then the Church in America is the key.

Throughout history, and for many nations even today, sovereignty has rested with the monarch. In the United Kingdom, if the monarch is not satisfied with government, he or she can dissolve it and call elections. In America, the people exercise the same sovereignty every 2 years when they have an election. If satisfied, they can choose to keep those who are in power or they can choose new personnel.

But no matter how it's done, the success of a nation rests on the success of its sovereign. And if you want a righteous government, you need a righteous sovereign. The sovereign must be able to select leaders who will pursue righteousness and remove leaders who pursue wickedness. Yet in order for the sovereign to do this, the sovereign must be righteous – which means in a nation where the people are sovereign, you must have a righteous people in order to have a righteous government.

Presidents Adams and Washington understood this. They understood the American form of government, where the people are sovereign, was made only for a “moral and religious” people. They openly proclaimed, the American government was

not adequate for any other type of people.

And how can the American people be righteous? God is the sole source of righteousness, and man can only come to God through Christ. The pathway to righteousness comes through Christ and His Church. If America is to be strong, it will only be strong when the Church is healthy. The Church holds the key to life and righteousness, serves as the extension of Christ's body, and ministers as the teacher of God's Word. America is dependent on a healthy church.

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then the Church in America is the key."*

So if you want to serve your country, you can start by building God's Church. Begin by ensuring you are a member of the Church yourself. To become a member you must accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You must repent of your sins and believe in the Son. This brings you into Christ's body. Then you must submit yourself under the headship of Christ and the leaders of His Church. Be disciplined/mentored by someone who is more mature in the faith.

Then grow in your faith by reading the Word and bringing your requests to God in prayer. Seek counsel in life decisions through the leaders of your church. Pursue holiness, and love and serve the people of the church. As you grow in these things, take this message to the lost world. Share the Gospel of Christ with others, and as they come to know the Lord, raise them up as disciples. Teach them the things others taught you. Then encourage them to do the same. Grow His Church one person at a time.

And as the Church grows, the righteousness of the nation will grow. As the Church grows, the conscience of the nation will grow. The sovereign people will then reflect righteousness, and as a result, the government will reflect righteousness.

So for the sake of the American people and America itself, build the Lord's Church. Christ always has been and always will be the nation's only hope.

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When the Church's shepherds speak to shepherds of government

Following week 3 of Iowa's 2018 legislative session, TFL's Vice President of Church Engagement Greg Baker shares his heart on how bringing pastors to the Capitol blesses both the government and the people governed by it:

Learn more at:
<https://thefamilyleader.com/iowa-capitol-project/>

The Timeless Voice: Why our legislature needs to pray

Commentary by Greg Baker

Like in most state capitols across America, the Iowa State Capitol begins each morning in prayer. As the culture becomes

more secular, many wonder, what is the future of morning prayer? Is it any longer appropriate in today's culture? Is it good use of the state's time and resources? Is the state just merely keeping a tradition?

I believe opening each chamber in prayer is the most important work that the Iowa Legislature does each day, and if prayer was to be removed not only would the legislature suffer, but so would the people of Iowa.

When King Solomon was crowned king over Israel, he had big shoes to fill. His father, King David, was perhaps Israel's best king. David was not a perfect king, but he was a very good king. King Solomon knew that it would not be easy to replace David, and he also knew the gravity and importance of his position.

In 1 Kings 3, God offers Solomon anything that he would want, to which Solomon responds, "Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (1 Kings 3:7-9).

Solomon asked God for wisdom. Why? Because Solomon knew if he was going to govern the people of Israel well, he needed wisdom from above. The role of the king is difficult. Not every issue that comes before the king is black and white. If the king is going to administer fair justice, he must have wisdom from God. Solomon understood this, and he asked God for that wisdom.

"The tasks before Iowa and our nation are much too great not to pray to the God who created the heavens and the earth."

Every morning that legislature opens in prayer our governing officials are humbling themselves before the same God of David and Solomon. They are saying, "I am not that smart. I do not have it all together. God, I need you, and your wisdom to govern this great people of Yours."

If our government leaders do not seek the Lord to carry out the difficult tasks before them, they will be more likely to govern from pride and earthly wisdom instead. But no earthly wisdom can bring about true, fair justice. It will bring out a cheap substitute and will leave the king and the people calling for more.

The tasks before Iowa and our nation are much too great *not* to pray to the God who created the heavens and the earth. We, as people, are far too weak to carry this on our own. God invites us to share our load with Him. Let Him carry the burden, for we are inadequate to do so without Him.

Behind the gavel in the Iowa House and Senate hangs a portrait of President Lincoln. As we start each morning in prayer, let's remember these words President Lincoln spoke in 1863: "We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!"

That is why our governing officials must start their morning in prayer. As a state and nation, we must continue to be humble and ask God for the wisdom we all need from Him. Let us never become too proud to pray to the God that made us.

[Click here to watch Greg's short video, "Congressional prayer: So much more than a tradition."](#)

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The Timeless Voice: Shepherds, lead us into dark valleys

Commentary by Greg Baker

America has built perhaps the most powerful empire in the history of the world. It has accumulated wealth and influence well beyond what the Founders could have ever envisioned. But this has not come without challenges. Throughout history, America's shepherds have risen to meet these challenges, and if America is to thrive in the new century, it will need its shepherds of today to rise to their calling and lead the sheep ... **not where we want to go, but where we must go.**

God has raised up shepherds in His creation. The shepherd is essential, often unliked, and as a result has the most difficult job in the world. The shepherd's role is to guide sheep who do not wish to be guided to the path of life. They are a guide, a guardian, and a protector. God calls His shepherds to lay down their life for their sheep, even when the sheep don't notice and will seldom thank them for it. The shepherd rarely looks out for his own interests, but for the interest of others.

God's institution of government also has shepherds. That role

traditionally rested with a king as lawmaker, judge, and executive. In America, these roles rest with U.S. Congress and state legislatures, the president and governors, and supreme court justices. These are America's shepherds of government.

America is in a challenging place as a nation, yet the sheep are very comfortable. Sheep do not like to be moved from their comfort zone, even if the zone threatens their lives. They will just continue to lay where they are unless someone moves them. God often compares people to sheep, because it is in our nature to pursue comfort and stay there, even when we know it is killing us. The shepherds, therefore, must move the sheep, or they will die. This is not easy, and the shepherd is rarely liked, but the shepherd must do his job.

America's challenges will requires its shepherds to lead their people into dark, uncomfortable valleys. Healthcare costs, growing deficits, the immigration crisis, the breakdown of the family, and so much more will not take easy solutions and will require great sacrifice, but America needs its shepherds to lead her people through the dark valley.

Solutions will not be simple, and it will require forsaking partisanship to come together to find real solutions. Solomon wisely understood that he needed wisdom from above to govern the great people of Israel. America's shepherds in government must come together and beseech the Lord for His wisdom to solve America's crises. Then after the wisdom is received, they must act on it. They must lead the sheep through the valley.

Unfortunately, the sheep will not move easily, joyfully, or peacefully. The sheep want to stay comfortable. They do not understand their comfort is their doom. They do not understand that in that dark valley are sweeter and better waters. They don't understand that the dark valley leads to life. Instead they will fight the shepherd. But God has called His shepherds to lay down their lives and lead them anyway.

In America, this can be difficult because in America the sheep vote. These dark valleys will cost many of our elected officials their jobs. It will require them to lay down their careers, and they may never be thanked for it. It will be very important for the shepherds of the Church to encourage America's government leaders through this valley. Pastors understand these things, because they too lead the sheep through these valleys.

The shepherd is an extremely difficult job, but it is a rewarding job. The Chief Shepherd, Christ, has gone before you, and He literally laid down His life for the sheep. He is cheering for you, and He will reward you for your sacrifice. Don't seek to please the sheep, because what pleases them often leads to death. Instead seek to please the Chief Shepherd. For what He desires brings life. Be the shepherd that God has called you to be. Be the shepherd the nation doesn't want, but desperately needs.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:1-4).

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

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The Timeless Voice: How a simple trap muffles the Church

To be the “Timeless Voice,” the Church needs to be a voice of timeless truth into the culture, not just another voice of culture itself. In other words, “In the world, not of it.” But this recent Thanksgiving revealed to me just how hard that can be.

I had been reading Ezekiel recently, and a verse about Egypt really stuck out to me: “But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt” (Ezekiel 20:8). God was upset with Israel, because they never removed Egypt from their hearts. Egypt had more of an effect on them than they did on Egypt. That made me think of my own heart. How much of Egypt is still in my heart? How much does this world still impact how much I think?

This reality of “Egypt” still being in my heart overflowed this Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is one of the few days a year that I buy my local newspaper ... because I want the ads. I want to see the Black Friday deals. Now, being excited for deals in and of itself is not the issue. What it does to my heart is the issue. Thanksgiving is supposed to be a holiday where we reflect on all of the provisions God has given us and be thankful for them. It is a holiday of contentment. For me and for so many other Americans, however, it has become the kickoff day for the season of wanting more – the season of shopping and obsessing over all the things we long to have or believe we now need, as the culture around us tells us we need

them.

Alas, this is not the only time that happens. I feel a need to buy the Under Armour brand, and when I see sales on Under Armour, I use them to justify my purchases. Why do I feel compelled to buy? It is not a premeditated thought. It is just an overflow from my heart. My eyes see Under Armour every day, everywhere, and my heart begins to think I need it.

This world is after our hearts. It wants us to embrace and find life in the things it has to offer. When we give in, however, we lose focus. We lose the bigger picture. We are no longer ambassadors of Christ, but we become ambassadors for "Egypt" instead.

Yet resisting the world's siren call is not as simple as changing a few of our actions. It is not as simple as, "Just quit buying things and remove yourself from the world." "Egypt" is a problem in the heart. There is a reason God tells us to guard our heart, because everything we do really does overflow from it (Proverbs 4:23).

And changing the heart begins with realizing we are most productive for the kingdom of God when our eyes are focused on the kingdom. We are most productive when we have an eternal perspective, look at the unseen, and put our treasures in heaven. Life cannot be found in the things of this world. They cannot satisfy our innermost desires. And if we are going to share this freeing message, this timeless truth, with the world, then we must actually believe it and illustrate it to others. Only then can we have an eternal impact on culture.

For those who are in Christ, Satan cannot separate you from God, but he can distract you and take you off mission. Your flesh and this world ally with him in this endeavor. Therefore, we must guard our hearts. We must tear down the idols of "Egypt." In a world that never seems to find contentment, satisfaction, rest, or peace, let us instead show

them rest, satisfaction, contentment, and peace – the kind that can only be found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Be content this holiday season. Be joy-filled, and let not the world sway you. And when the world asks why you are not doing as they do, point to Christ (1 Peter 4:4).

Brothers and sisters, let's live a life that stands out in one of the greatest empires of world history. Let's guard our heart to be the timeless voice.

The Timeless Voice: The Church's rightful relationship to government

Commentary by Greg Baker

Throughout history there has been a debate over the role of the Church as an institution when it comes to public policy. Does the Church even have a role to play in government?

The United States has largely bought into the motto of "separation of church and state," but what does that practically mean?

According to the Bible, government is an institution established by God with the primary purpose to punish evil and praise those who do good (see Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2). Yet how can government determine good and evil without God? Without the voice of the Church rightly proclaiming the truths of Scripture? **To do its job successfully, the government needs the Church to fulfill the proper role of spiritual guide and counselor.**

For government, like the Church, wrestles with difficult issues that impact not just nations and laws and economies, but real people's lives – such as the drug crisis, unplanned pregnancies, poverty, immigration, and so much more. The government carries people's burdens, just as our churches do. Thus the shepherds of government and the shepherds of God's Church have much in common, albeit with different responsibilities. **Both are institutions of God's, and if they work together they can be a blessing to the people.**

The Church, however, has a unique role to play because it holds the Truth, God's Word. The Church holds a larger, eternal perspective on what is truly happening in the culture, and the Church holds the true solution. As government works to administer justice, it needs guidance from the Church.

It is not the Church's responsibility, however, to create public policy. That role belongs to the government. God calls those who serve in government His "ministers" and assigns His ministers of government – not His ministers of the Church – responsibility to administer justice.

The Church's responsibility is to share what God says about the issues the government is wrestling with. What do the timeless principles of Scripture teach? The Bible speaks to the root of every issue the government faces. The Church must lay out these biblical principles before the nation's "kings" as the government works to administer justice. The Church is the moral compass and advisor to the "king." Without the Church, the "king" will only receive worldly counsel and will never be able to administer true biblical justice.

As the Church lays out these principles, it is the "king's" responsibility to administer these principles in public policy. The Church must check to ensure that public policy includes the full counsel of God. The Church must also be a leader in speaking to the culture, encouraging when "the king" has it right and correcting when "the king" has it wrong.

The Church must speak not only to a few issues, but to all issues. Each individual pastor and local church may not be able to do that, but when you tap into the full global church as an institution, God has gifted congregations in different areas. When the full Church comes together, the full counsel of God can be given to the “king.”

As a result, not only will biblical justice be advocated, but the “king” will also see that God cares personally about each individual issue – not just the hot-button topics – the government wrestles with. And then, perhaps, the “king” will also see how personal God is and be drawn into a relationship with Him.

Beyond just the issues, however, the Church must not forget to offer personal counsel to the “king” as well. King David ruled with justice and righteousness because he walked with the Lord his God. The same is true with our “kings” today. If we are to have true biblical justice, our “kings” must have a relationship with God. The Church must pour into these men and women on a personal, spiritual level. It must share the Gospel with them with a heart to lead them to Christ, plug them into a local church, and see them disciplined.

A new heart lies at the center of true justice. That is the beauty of the Church ministering to the ministers of government. The Church can use the issues today’s “kings” face to point them to the God of Justice and guide them to form a personal relationship with Him. Only the Church can fulfill this unique role of ministering to the “king,” both individually and as a minister of justice.

Most importantly, at the center of this Christian witness, the Church as an institution must be a voice independent of worldly factions and allegiances. The Church’s voice is not to be a voice from this kingdom, but a voice for God’s kingdom. It must not be Republican or Democrat, nor conservative or liberal. No, it must be clear that its allegiance is to

another kingdom alone. The Church is the ambassador of God who created the heavens and the earth, and it stands for the same truths it always has. It must never be shaken, and it must never change.

The Church must recognize and adopt the attitude that majority parties come and majority parties go. Presidents come and presidents go. Nations come and nations go, but the Lord remains forever. We are not afraid or impressed by you. We are the Church. We were here before you, and we will be here well after you are gone.

Daniel is an excellent example: He was not only a voice to four different emperors, he was also a voice to two different empires. How is that possible? Because Daniel did not come from the institution of government. He was an outside voice. He came from a completely different kingdom. When the kingdoms of earth changed, Daniel's job continued and did not change. The same is true for the Church in America. If the American government dissolved tomorrow, the Church's responsibility would not change. The Church must simply approach the new king the same way.

This truth is essential to be a proper witness of Christ in the civic arena. The Church has to get this right if it is ever going to get the relationship between Church and state right. The Church must assume its proper role and loyalty – as a moral compass and guide to the institution of government as well as an ambassador of its true king, God alone.

Our nation, as all nations, desperately needs this right relationship between Church and state. Minister of God in the Church, will you arise and take your role in the civic arena? Not as the nation's politicians desire, but as God desires? The "king" needs you. The nation needs you. The kingdom is calling.

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The Timeless Voice: America, and God, in times of pain

Commentary by Greg Baker

The past few months have been difficult for America. From hurricanes to forest fires to a tragic shooting in Las Vegas, our nation is going through painful trials. It is a cold, hard reminder that this world is perishing. It is decaying. From our bodies (2 Corinthians 4:16) to the planet itself, our world is dying (1 John 2:17).

We are witnessing continually the consequences of the Fall, sin, and death. We are witnessing how they are not only destroying us, but our planet as well. As each day passes, sin does more and more damage to creation.

“For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God” – Romans 8:20-21

This reality has left the world puzzled, and many have turned to government for help. Now, government does have a job to do – it is God’s institution of justice. And government must work to protect people from wrongdoing in the world.

But government can only establish laws and punish lawbreakers; it cannot deal with the heart of the lawbreaker or the internal suffering of man. In other words, it cannot solve the

real problem. For that, the world needs the Church.

Just as government must seek justice, the Church must speak the Truth to where the real problem is: people's hearts ("The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" Jeremiah 17:9). The difficult truth is that man apart from God is prone to all nature of evil desires. Greed, lust, pride, selfishness, envy, coveting, and more lurk in all of our hearts (Galatians 5:19-21). Left unchecked, and in the proper circumstances, these things can lead us to do the most awful things. That is what we witnessed in Vegas.

Therefore, the Church must proclaim God's plan for redemption, a plan in place from the moment sin entered the world. Yes, sin has separated us from a holy God, but He has a plan to redeem people back to Him. He has a plan to save us from ourselves, our sin, and from this perishing world.

The world needs the Church to warn that we can never achieve this redemption on our own, no matter how hard we try. The Church needs to help the world see that it is not only the infamous criminals that fall short, but every single one of us has fallen short (Romans 3:23).

The Church must share with the world that God has an answer for all of this, and that answer comes from His Son. God took the punishment that every one of us deserves and put it on His Son, who did what we can never do – live a perfect, holy life – and therefore deserved no punishment ("God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" 2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus took the wrath, the justice, by paying for our sins on the Cross.

The world needs the Church to share the message that this is available for all people. Anyone who repents and believes in Christ has eternal life. Not because of anything they have done, but because of what Jesus has done. The debt has been

paid (Romans 10:9-11).

Ultimately, our suffering world needs the Church to paint the picture of restoration. First, that when a person comes to know Christ, that person is born again, a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). But that is just the beginning of the restoration process. For someday there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and we will have new bodies, and sin and suffering will be no more. People need to hear this hope.

Yet they will likely ask why that day is not today. Why does God permit this suffering world to continue?

Thus the Church must speak of God's patient mercy toward us all. We must understand that in order to create a new creation, God has to destroy the current creation. And He is not ready to do that yet because many have yet to Christ as their Lord and Savior. Our temporary suffering, as great as it may be, pales in comparison to the eternal suffering of those who reject Him. So God is patiently giving us time before judging creation.

You and I must take advantage of this time of patience. The world must know God wants all people to come to the knowledge of Him, so He waits.

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"
– 2 Peter 3:9

Yes, there is much government can do to protect us from pain. Government, along with the Church, must commend the good done amidst all these tragedies. People risked their lives by charging into bullets to save strangers and people have given millions of dollars and thousands of volunteer hours in natural disaster regions. Despite our sin, people still bear the image of God, and we must celebrate when they embrace that

image. Government and the Church must work together to meet people's needs amidst these natural disasters, and government must work to find ways to prevent future tragedies like Las Vegas.

In the end, however, this world is perishing, and God will someday call all of these things into judgement. The Church must speak to Truth of the gospel in this world, while we are still in this time of patience. For ultimate hope is not found in this earth – neither in our good deeds nor in our government – it is found in the earth to come, and God desires all people join Him in it, and so must we.

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Timeless Voice: The 2 virtues of godly government

Commentary by Greg Baker

"King David reigned over all Israel, doing what is right and just for all his people." – 2 Samuel 8:15

King David was God's chosen governing authority over Israel, and he did what was right in God's eyes, because David was able to fulfill government's God-given purpose: justice.

Government is an institution of God's with the purpose to punish evil and reward good (Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2). Government is also a gift from God. When sin entered the world, God could have easily left us to our own vices, but in His mercy He gave us government. He gave us a unique

institution designed to give fallen people law, order, and stability in a world being destroyed by the chaos of sin. It is our great protector. That is why God calls all governing authorities His “ministers.”

Administering justice, however, can be very tricky. You must understand who God is to administer true justice, for justice is part of God’s character. God loves justice (Isaiah 61:8); He requires justice; and yet ... He is also God of mercy and compassion. These two virtues – justice and mercy – are somehow woven simultaneously into the character of God. And for government to reflect God’s design, it must also reflect His character – and that means ruling with both virtues, justice and mercy.

The Cross is a beautiful symbol that reveals the God of grace, mercy, compassion, and justice. God offered people grace, mercy, and compassion by offering a payment for sins, yet He still had to carry out justice on His Son.

“This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.’” – Zechariah 7:9

On one hand, administering justice includes both punishing the evil and rewarding the good. Rewarding the good incentivizes and elevates good behavior. Government is not only a discourager, but also an encourager. Commend the good.

Yet punishment is still necessary: “Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them” (Proverbs 13:24). Punishment is a form of discipline. God disciplines those He loves. Discipline teaches us a lesson and guides us to the correct path: “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11). True justice will always include discipline.

All justice must be fair, blind, and applied equally. God demands it: "Differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to the LORD" (Proverbs 20:10). That means justice cannot favor a race, ethnicity, sex, social-economic status, or any other way the world divides us. It must be fair for all people.

But even then, government must also never forget mercy. Laws must embody both God's heart for justice and His heart for mercy. Throughout the Scriptures, for example, we see a pattern of extending mercy to the repentant. Not removing all consequences, God nonetheless offers mercy to the humble and broken-hearted. It is the heart of the 2 Chronicles 7:14 message: To those who are willing to repent and return to the ways of the Lord, God was willing to show mercy. David also received mercy after repenting of his sins with Bathsheba. If we are to see true biblical justice today, our laws must reflect God's heart of mercy for the humble and broken-hearted. Parole is an excellent example: It does not remove consequences, but does offer mercy.

We need to recognize, however, that **the right weights of justice and mercy are impossible for people to decipher on their own**. David was able to administer justice and righteousness for his people only because he had a relationship with God, the source of justice: "I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do" (Acts 13:22).

David was also willing to listen to counsel from the Lord's shepherds. Though David was not perfect, he ultimately submitted to the counsel of both Samuel and Nathan. If governments are going to reflect this tricky balance, governing authorities must walk with the Lord their God and listen to the timeless voice of the Church: "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers" (Proverbs 11:14).

This incredible balance will also require a great amount of wisdom. When Solomon became king, God told him that he could ask for anything in the world, and God would give it to him. Solomon asked for wisdom: “Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?” (2 Chronicles 1:10). Solomon knew if he was going to administer true justice and show mercy, he needed wisdom from above.

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” – Micah 6:8

If the kings of today are to administer justice, as God has called them to, they must walk with the Lord their God, seek counsel and guidance from His Church, and call to Him for the wisdom they need to administer both justice and mercy. If they do this, then their government will be a blessing to its people, and will lead them in the way of righteousness: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 33:12).

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The Timeless Voice: Set apart in a partisan world

Commentary by Greg Baker

Last week I got together with a friend who loves the Lord but sits on the other side of the political aisle from me. To have such a friend has been an answer to prayer, and the goal of

our relationship is to spur one another on in Christ.

The relationship started with an effort to find common ground and places we can work together. Our friendship has accomplished both of these things, and so much more. As I have combed through the Scriptures with this brother in the Lord and heard his thoughts on different issues, I have been challenged to search even deeper through the Scriptures to find God's answers and not my own. At times God's answers are not always the most convenient, but they are the truth.

This relationship, along with others like it, has also changed the way I view politics. It has brought to light this verse: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). It has taught me that we as Christians must not build our worldview of government on theories and worldly philosophies. Rather than conforming to labels like "conservatism" or "liberalism," or any other human ideology, we must allow the Scriptures to determine and define our worldview.

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The Word of God is the only universal truth in this world. And it is not conservative or liberal. It is just the Truth. The truth is often inconvenient and constantly challenges our form of thinking. If you are reading the Bible to reinforce the way you are thinking, you are not reading it with the right heart. As believers we should study the Scriptures to better come to the knowledge of who God is, who we are, and what He says is true. We must conform to His way of thinking. He is the source of life (John 6:47-48), which means He and His Word lead to life. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Anything opposed to His words leads to death.

The Scriptures will constantly challenge our way of thinking and renew our minds, changing us throughout our lives (Romans

12:2; Philippians 1:6). The Word of God is sanctifying us, and making us more and more like Christ. Yet we must be willing to let the Word of God change our minds, even when verses challenge our deeply held beliefs. Scriptures will not always line up with our politics. When that happens, we will be forced to ask, "Who do we trust, our political ideology or God?"

Republican, Democrat, conservative, and liberal – all of these things are temporary and worldly philosophies. They are perishing, as this world is perishing (1 John 2:17). Presidents come and presidents go, majorities come and majorities go, but the Word of the Lord remains forever. We must never forget this amazing universal truth. God's Word was in existence well before this nation was created, and it will be in existence long after this nation passes. "The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of the Lord remains forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

I envision a day when brothers and sisters in the Lord from all different political beliefs sit down together and study the Word of God. Yet what will bring us together is not a simple commitment to bipartisanship; we must work together in the Lord, to seek a common truth, His Word. "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Philippians 2:2). We must go beyond seeking common ground. We must find out what is actually true. Conservative and liberal leaning Christians must work together to find where God stands on an issue and conform to that. That is where unity is found. That is our "same mind," the universal truth of God's Word. We must not be governed by conservatism or liberalism, but by the Bible.

Brothers and sisters, in a world that is getting more and more political, where you can't even watch a football game without being confronted with divisive politics, we have an incredible opportunity to be a light. God wants us to look different. He wants us to stand out. And what makes us stand out is not how

brightly we shine red or blue, but rather our refusal to conform to the colors of the world.

I encourage you, my brothers and sisters, stand out from the world in the arena of civics. Don't identify with the world's factions. Build your ideology on the truths in the Scriptures, and work to conform every thought and belief to the Word of God, including your political beliefs. If you do this, you will not only be unique, but you will be a true light in a dark and perishing world (1 John 2:17).

Greg Baker is The FAMiLY LEADER Foundation's vice president of church engagement.

The Timeless Voice: Why government needs the Church

Commentary by Greg Baker

Throughout history, and throughout the Scriptures, the unique relationship between the shepherds of God's institutions – government and the Church – has been vital to society's success. In fact, the government needs the Church to fulfill its biblical role. For the Church represents a voice not swayed by cultural trends, but rather standing for the timeless truths of the Scriptures, no matter how the culture tugs on government.

One of Scripture's most revealing examples is the relationship between King David and the prophet of the Lord, Nathan. King David is remembered as one of Israel's best kings, described as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). In fact, it is through the lineage of David that Christ now reigns.

David's reign, however, was far from perfect.

King David suffered several dark periods, including a time when he committed adultery and murder. When other kings led their nations into war, willing to fight and even die for their people (as David had done in his younger days), David decided to stay at home and let others die for him. He esteemed his life and time more important than the people he was supposed to be serving. And while his men were at war without him, David saw the lovely Bathsheba and took her as his own. When her husband (one of David's soldiers at war) got in his way, David had him killed. David's reign had become not only selfish, but tyrannical.

Then the prophet Nathan enters the stage. The shepherd of the Lord, risking his life, stepped into David's palace and corrected the king. As the timeless voice, he called King David out for doing wrong.

But what if Nathan had never approached David? What would have happened? Perhaps we would not be reading David's Psalms today. The books of Samuel, chronicling David's life, would look very different. The lineage of Christ may have even looked different. But thank God for Nathan. Thank God the timeless voice did its job.

Nathan and David, however, are not a unique outlier. Again and again the timeless voice rose to speak to the kings of old. Joseph and Moses stood before the pharaohs of their day. The prophet Daniel interacted in the lives of four different emperors. Even in the New Testament, John the Baptist stood before King Herod and Paul before Caesar himself.

Contrary to what many would like to believe, government is not an institution of this world. It is an institution of God's, with the purpose to punish evil and reward good (1 Peter 2). Those who serve in it are called the Lord's ministers (Romans 13). It is God's institution of justice, and when government

does its job well, it is a blessing to its people.

Yet government cannot be a blessing to its people, cannot be an institution of justice, rightly parsing right from wrong, if it's left unanchored to sway with every current of culture or popular opinion. It needs the counsel of the Church, the timeless voice.

Throughout the Scriptures, kings wise enough to listen to the timeless voice prospered. Those that didn't, didn't. Egypt's pharaoh during the times of Joseph listened, and Egypt was blessed. But the pharaoh of Moses's day did not listen, and the great Egyptian empire was brought to its knees.

God established our social institutions, government among them, but the Church is perhaps the most unique. With Jesus Christ as its head, the Church is the only source of absolute truth in an ever-changing world. That is why God designed government and the church to work together. Government needs the counsel of the Church to determine good from evil. Without the Church, government has to find answers from the world, and apart from the truth, many ways seem right to a person, but in the end they lead to death (Proverbs 14:12).

As the Church, therefore, we must engage the government by being the timeless voice of truth God has called us to be. Our government and nation, as well as all nations of the world, depend on it.

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In a “Timeless Voice,” the Church speaks to government

Commentary by Greg Baker

I believe that God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of Him (1 Timothy 2:4). That means people from all political parties and ideologies, and even those who serve as elected officials.

But how do we carry that message, that desire of God’s heart, into the halls of government?

1 Corinthians 9 gives us an answer in the form of a model: As Paul ministered to both Jew and Gentile, we must seek to tear down partisan walls to minister to both Republican and Democrat. Paul may have changed the way he communicated (1 Corinthians 9:20-22), but nowhere did Paul compromise or change his message. We have to do the same.

If we are to be a light to all aspects of our culture, including government, the Lord’s people must engage in culture in a biblical way (Matthew 5:16).

I further believe the political/partisan war in this nation can come to an end, but it will only be done through the healing power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our governing authorities don’t need a political change, they need a heart change, and only the gospel has the power to do it.

That is why I have begun writing this new column called “The Timeless Voice,” with the goal of equipping believers to engage in civics in a biblical way by highlighting a biblical perspective towards current events, political worldviews, and history. Rather than looking through the perspective of worldly institutions, the column asks how we as believers can renew our minds to see how God views these things – and then

use that understanding to bring Him glory by speaking Truth, not politics, into the culture.

Check out the first two columns:

["A challenge to the head of state"](#)

["Who's the real enemy?"](#)

The Church has been a timeless voice to the culture throughout history. Though culture constantly changes, the Word of God never does. Just as Joseph and Moses advised Egypt, as Daniel advised Babylon, as Elijah advised Ahab, as Nathan advised David, and as Paul advised Rome, the culture today needs the Church to be that timeless voice – that rock that stands for the Truth, no matter what direction the culture is going.

The timeless voice is not a voice from this kingdom. It is not Republican or Democrat, nor conservative or liberal. No, the timeless voice doesn't even come from this world; it comes from a completely other kingdom. The timeless voice represents the God who created the heavens and the earth, and it stands for the same truths it always has. It must never be shaken, and it must never change. That voice is what is needed in America today.

America needs the Church to be who God has called them to be: His ambassadors to the people of the world ... the timeless voice.

Greg Baker is The FAMiLY LEADER Foundation's vice president of church engagement.

Timeless Voice: Who's the real enemy?

Commentary by Greg Baker

A great, partisan divide is consuming America. As soon as one election gets over, the next has already begun. There is little time for coming together after an election, and with Washington, D.C., in constant campaign mode, very little is actually getting done.

Many Christians have been dragged into this partisan battle as well and have picked their preferred side and drawn their battle lines.

But is it the right battle?

I believe our nation cannot heal and truly move forward until God's people lift their eyes out of the trenches and look at the world instead through an eternal perspective: when the Church calls out the *real* enemy and begins to fight where the *real* battle lines are.

In this world, we do have an enemy, and it is not the person or political party that disagrees with us. Our real enemy is Satan. A liar and thief from the very beginning, Satan has declared war on the saints and on the work of our Father. Against God's work of reconciliation, Satan has fostered division. Against healing, sickness. Against love, hate.

And to combat Satan's work, we must know what his work is. His work begins with lies that result in captivity and end in death and eternal separation from God. In the beginning, Satan used lies to deceive Adam and Eve, which led to rebellion against God, which ushered sin into the world, which took people captive, which led to death.

Yet Jesus came to undo the devil's work: "The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the devil's works" (1 John 3:8).

When Jesus came into this world, He attacked the very root of Satan's work, lies, by testifying the Truth. Then he destroyed Satan's second work, sin, by paying its penalty on the Cross. Finally, Jesus conquered Satan's last work, death, by resurrecting from the dead on the third day.

And Jesus summed up his efforts in a sermon at Capernaum, by quoting from Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is on Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners." – Isaiah 61:1

Christ came and died for sinners like you and me. He exposed that man was not the enemy, but rather the captive – captive to lies, sin, death, and under the dominion of the evil one. Jesus rescued us from the dominion of darkness, and brought us into the dominion of the light.

As believers, if we truly want to change the world, we must engage in our Savior's work, destroying the devil's schemes. This is where the real battle lines are. Not R vs. D, but rather darkness vs. light.

"I now send you to them to open their eyes so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that by faith in Me they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified." – Acts 26:17-18.

We must proclaim the Truth Jesus taught us. We must share the Truth that has the power to set people free. We must proclaim what Jesus did on that Cross, and how He defeated death. We, ourselves, cannot overcome the world, but we don't have to.

Jesus did (John 16:33).

We are told America is divided into two political parties, two ideologies. But the real divide is not Republican vs. Democrat or liberal vs. conservative. It's not even political. The real divide is spiritual. Either we will labor for this world, which is under the dominion of Satan, or we will join our Heavenly Father and labor for the next world, the Kingdom of Light.

God has called us to witness this powerful message to all people, including people on the left and the right. Both sides need salvation, as all people fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Darkness and light have nothing in common. This nation will only find unity when it labors in the light. Christians will only find success when they pull people from the darkness into the light.

Our nation can come together and heal from this partisan divide. We can find answers that can truly help people. We may not always agree, but if we earnestly seek Him, we will find Him and begin to heal. Christ always has been and always will be our answer.

So what are your goals in your ministry in the civic arena? Is it to get people to vote like you to make sure your side wins? Or is it to proclaim liberty to the captives, to heal the brokenhearted, and bring good news to the poor? Stop building an earthly political kingdom, and labor to pull people from darkness into the light. Fight the real enemy. The real battle. And then, and only then, will we begin to see healing and victory.

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[Click here](#) to read another "Timeless Voice" column from Greg Baker.