

BF&M 15: THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

Memory Verses: *"You are the light of the world. ... Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."* Matthew 5:14, 16

The title of this article reminds us that each of us is a citizen of two kingdoms. As Christians, we are citizens of a spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of God. We also live within a social order and under the authority of a national government. The content of this article addresses how we should live in light of our dual citizenship.

The BF&M states that *"All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth."*

Gospel Centered

Our primary weapon against social dilemmas of every size and shape is the gospel of Christ. The fundamental problem at every level of human society is sin. Jesus began with the transformation of the individual which then had consequences for society. Consider the examples of Christ's dealings with Zacchaeus (**Luke 19:8-10**) and Nicodemus (**John 3:3**). Heavenly citizenship does not lead to disinterest in the things of this life, but a genuine concern that men, women, and societies would be increasingly sinless to the Creator, **Matt 6:10**. Christ expected that those who were part of the kingdom he was establishing would make positive impact on the societies of this world, **Matt 5:13-16; John 17:15-18**. The order is key: righteousness leads to transformation, not the other way around.

Oppose and Provide

In the gospel, God's demonstrates with crystal-like clarity that he opposes sin and befriends the nation. This same attitude should be reflected in the lives of believers also. Racism should be opposed because it

denies that every human being has been c_____ by God in his image and ignores the multi-racial e_____ that awaits believers, **Gen 1:27-28; Rev 5:9-10**. God abhors greed or coveting because it is idolatry and leads to oppression of others, **Eph 5:5; Amos 8:4-6**. Sexual immorality assaults God's g_____ intention for human sexuality and treats others as o_____, **Exod 20:14; Lev 18:22**.

As vigorously as we should fight sin, we should seek to help those in need. Such activities were part of our Lord's m_____ and they should be part of ours as well (even if differently!), **Luke 4:18-21; Matt 25:35-36**. In particular, we are to care for the most vulnerable, w_____ and o_____. **James 1:27; Psalm 68:5**. In our time, the vulnerable and the defenseless include u_____ children and those near the e____ of life. "Based on our conviction that all human life is sacred from conception until natural death, Christians must oppose abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide, human cloning, and any technology or research that involves the destruction of a human embryo." Consider the following related to the sanctity of life:

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| ___ 1. Genesis 1:27 | a. We are made in God's image. |
| ___ 2. Exodus 20:13 | b. God made us and will help us. |
| ___ 3. Psalm 139:13-16 | c. God chose his prophet before he was formed in the womb. |
| ___ 4. Isaiah 44:2, 24 | d. God created us for good works He planned long ago. |
| ___ 5. Jeremiah 1:5 | e. Do not murder. |
| ___ 6. Ephesians 2:10 | f. God makes us in the womb, and he knows all our days from the beginning. |

As Herschel Hobbs stated it, "[The Christian] should endeavor to bring the whole of society to live according to the principles of righteousness, truth, and love. But he should do so as a Christian, not merely as a social crusader (James 2; 1 John 4:7-21)."

Christian Citizenship

In addition to expecting his disciples to work for the good of others, Jesus also taught them to be g_____ citizens of earthly kingdoms, **Matt 22:21**. God established c_____ government as a means to p_____ what is good and o_____ what is evil, **Rom 13:1-4**. If God's commands and the state's commands c_____, we are obligated to submit to the Lord, **Acts 4:18-20**. Thus, if we suffer under the l_____ it should be for the sake of Christ, **1 Peter 4:14-16**.