



# Introduction

## Secret Church, Session 1

### David Platt | April 2020

This is a really strange night, yet really good. I stand here in a room alone (except for a couple camera and sound folks) while you are all scattered literally all

around the world and in every state of the United States, in countries including Afghanistan, Australia, Botswana, Cambodia, Croatia, el Salvador, India, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malta, Nepal, Niger, Syria, Slovakia, Senegal, Tajikistan, Turkey, Vietnam, Zambia. I could keep going; the list is really long. All of us are spread out in homes as we're surrounded by a worldwide pandemic. But how powerful is Secret Church to be able to gather together in the middle of a pandemic with tens of thousands of people all around the world and open God's Word? For us to pray together all at the same time, lifting our voices and hearts before God, remembering our persecuted brothers and sisters, who by the way, just so happen to worship all the time in seclusion.

This leads me into one of the most exhilarating things tonight. We are launching a new initiative called "Urgent" that is focused on getting the gospel to the frontlines and hardest-to-reach places in the world. More on that later.

I am praying that God will smile on this unique gathering tonight, that as we're scattered in all these places, God would speak to us through His Word about what it means to glorify Him as citizens of different countries in the world, yet as citizens of one Kingdom in heaven. I'm praying God will draw many people into His Kingdom as a result of what happens tonight.

So let's do this. Hopefully, you have a study guide in your hands, either in a booklet or electronically, that we're going to work through together. It is saturated with Scripture that we won't have time to turn to; some passages we won't even have time to read tonight but I hope this will be a resource you'll be able to look back to in the days ahead, diving deeper into these studies. If you're new to Secret Church, know that I'm not under any illusion that this is the best way of walking through God's Word and digesting it fully. This is like standing in front of a fire hydrant. The reason why Secret Church is set up this way is because whenever I gather with persecuted Christians around the world who are risking their lives to be together, they want to make the most of this time, learning as much of God's Word as possible. So tonight, I'm going to open the fire hydrant in a way that I hope will enable you to soak it in for days, months and years to come.

Yes, it's going to be a long night but I pray that in the next few hours you will experience a joy in and hunger for God's Word that makes you realize this is better than anything this world has to offer. Yes, we have a pretty heavy and weighty topic to look at tonight—God, Government and the Gospel. Just so you know, there were a variety of wise counselors who warned me not to cover this topic and a variety of wise counselors who insisted I cover this topic. So I decided before last year's Secret Church to cover this

topic because I believe this is needed for every Christian in every country and specifically for the church in my country as we are in an election year.

That decision was confirmed less than two months later when I woke up one Sunday morning for what I thought would be a normal day here at McLean Bible Church in Metro Washington DC. During our last worship gathering that Sunday, I just finished my sermon, stepped off this stage like I do every week for what I thought would be a couple minutes of quiet reflection as we prepared to take the Lord's Supper. Then I immediately heard a voice calling me backstage where a couple of our pastors and a representative from the White House told me the President of the United States was on his way here, would arrive in about five minutes and would like us to pray for him.

A flood of thoughts went through my head, a number of which could have risen to the top and affected my decision one way or the other. The thought that rose to the top was 1 Timothy 2:1-6 where we're commanded to pray *"for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

So I quickly agreed to lead our church to pray for our president on the stage. I came back out to lead the Lord's Supper, then walked to the side where the president arrived about a minute later. We had a brief conversation backstage, then walked on stage, reminded the congregation of something I had just said at the end of the sermon—that what unites us is not our ethnicity, background or politics. We have members from over a hundred countries in our church, from many different personal perspectives and political backgrounds. I reminded them what unites us is the gospel and the Word of God, then read 1 Timothy 2:1-6. I said we have a unique opportunity today to pray as a church over the president of the United States.

So I prayed for him and other government leaders from different parties and for our country. When I finished, the president walked off stage without comment, we celebrated some missionary heroes among us, then we sent one another out like we do every Sunday with the Great Commission. I immediately knew though that what had happened would be received and perceived in different ways by everyone from the press to members of our church. Those different responses were confirmed soon thereafter as I spent most of Sunday night and Monday morning writing a letter to our church family to communicate what had happened and to reemphasize how I only want to lead our church with God's Word that transcends political party or position and that celebrates the unity we have in Christ amidst all of our differences.

Little did I know that as a result of that prayer on Sunday and that letter on Monday, I would find myself at the center of a social media firestorm with all kinds of opinions being expressed and words being twisted. I found myself turning down numerous requests to be on national TV. On Sunday I made a lot of people glad and others mad; on Monday I turned around and took everyone who was glad and made them mad. So in less than 24 hours, I was labeled both a far-right-wing conservative and a far-left-wing liberal. That's not easy to do.

Over the course of the night, we'll talk about why this was so controversial. Some of you are already thinking, "What's the problem. You prayed for the president." We're going to get to why, doing that on this stage disappointed, upset or confused many followers of Jesus. As I watched this unfold during that

week, I couldn't help but conclude, "We are sick with accusations, contempt, derision, division among professing Christians. And it's not just this side or that side; I think it's all of us, including me. I don't believe the church is healthy amidst the current political climate in my country. Then I think about other countries, especially persecuted brothers and sisters, where the government says it's illegal for Christians to gather together. So how does the gospel compel them to respond to government in those situations?

Then I think about missionaries. We have a lot of missionaries in different countries who are part of Secret Church. They are citizens of one country, but living in another country. So how do they relate to government? To the country from which they came? To the country in which they live? The reality is every single one of us lives under some form of government which means every single one of us needs to know what God says about government and how the gospel of Jesus Christ totally transforms the way we live and our view of government around us and around the world. So let's dive into the study guide.

**There are so many questions.** I'm just going to run through these to set the stage:

- How does God relate to governments, leaders and institutions? That's the most important question.
- How should Christians relate to government?
- Should we gladly submit to government, work to change government, or both—or neither?
- What if we don't agree with who the governing authorities are?
- What if we don't agree with how those authorities are governing?
- How does this apply to different types of governments in different parts of the world?
- How does this apply to Christians who are being persecuted under their government?
- Should Christians stay amidst persecution or flee from persecution?
- Is it ever right to disobey the government? If so, when? What does that look like?
- Should Christians work in government?
- What is justice and how does it relate to government?
- How should a Christian in government decide what is a crime and what the punishment should be? Is that based on the Bible or some other standard?
- Should all sin be a crime? If not, then what sin should (or should not) be a crime?
- Should Christians vote? If so, who should Christians vote for?
- What about situations where one candidate represents injustice X and the other candidate represents injustice Y? Who do you vote for then?
- Should Christians align with political parties, positions, personalities or presidents? If so, which party, position, personality or president?
- What should Christians do when they disagree about political parties, positions or candidates?
- Should churches exert any influence in politics?
- What does the separation of church and state mean? If church and state are separate, then is the United States a Christian nation? Was it ever a Christian nation?
- Is any country a Christian nation?
- Is there only one "Christian" position on political issues?
- Are some political issues more important than others? If so, is the level of political importance a matter of personal opinion or does the Bible determine that?
- Should pastors preach about political issues?
- Should pastors endorse political candidates or parties?
- Should a Christian be for or against gun control, abortion, environmental protection, graduated or progressive tax rates based on income, same-sex marriage, capital punishment, immigration restrictions, nuclear weapons, tariffs, military spending or universal health care?

Now as soon as I list all these issues, I want to be clear that we're not going to dive into all these issues. We'll answer some of them tonight right from God's Word. As we're going to see, there's so much here that necessitates wisdom from God's Word in a way that's not always clear.

**So many considerations.** In a sense these are landmines that I could easily step on; that we could all easily step on in our minds as we think about these things.

There's a **wide breadth of issues** that are involved in any country and across every country. When you think about government, don't just think about political parties or presidential elections; think about the house or apartment you may be sitting in right now. For many of us, there are government-mandated standards for safety in buildings that are affecting you and me right now. Or if you have food or snacks around you tonight, there may be government standards for safety in the production and distribution of that food. For example, if you're loading up on caffeinated energy drinks, I think there's some kind of standard that makes those drinks safe. Even the water you drink is likely affected by a government that oversees how it gets to you. Or the technology that we're using right now? The reality is that some governments of the world forbid streaming content like this. Some of you are actually in countries like that, so you're disobeying governments right now by using a VPN or other network.

My point is government affects so many things, so how do we cover a subject of government in one night? Not just the breadth of issues, but think of **the complexity of issues** when it comes to government or politics:

- Moral variables at work.
- Economic variables to consider.
- Physical variables to factor in.
- Social variables.
- Spiritual variables that we can't even see.
- Competing goods, meaning you have to make decisions between two good options.
- Lesser evils, meaning you often have to decide between two bad options.
- Inevitable trade-offs as we make decisions. We may choose this good, knowing it may lead to that evil. And all that might lead to debatable co-belligerence, meaning you may disagree with someone seriously about one issue, but agree and work closely together with that same person on a totally different issue. This leads to questions about how much you should work with a person, organization, institution or even a movement on common interests you have though you disagree on so many things they stand for.

So we have a wide breadth of issues. We have complexity of issues. Then we need to add on **the meaning of words**. Consider these words:

Liberal	Capitalism	Feminism	Amnesty
Conservative	Socialism	Judicial Activism	Illegal, Undocumented
Progressive	Marxism	Systemic Racism	Marriage
Right Wing	Nationalism	Social Justice	Gender
Left Wing	Zionism	Identity Politics	Sexual Orientation
Alt-Right	Ethnocentrism	Privilege	Family Planning
Alt-Left			Global Warming

As soon as I say any one of these terms, all kinds of thoughts, ideas, images, impressions, connotations and emotions come into your minds. The thing is these things are different for different ones of you. Most you are followers of Jesus, so think of all the confusion when you use those words in a world where most people are not followers of Jesus. All these terms have varying definitions and carry varying connotations among different people. All this makes me scared to say anything tonight, because as soon as I say this word or that word, you may be applying a different definition that I never intended. Communication revolves around a shared language and shared meaning of words, but when you get into political words that meaning is strained for sure.

So let's look at these definitions. Let me at least tell you what I mean when I use these words:

- Government: The organization through which a political unit exercises authority and performs functions. That sounds pretty general and technical, and it's intended to be both because it's not just countries that are governed. So this definition is general, including organizations, corporations and churches, involving people with a picture of who exercises what authority and who performs what functions. Now to be clear, we're going to talk primarily about public government of nations, states and cities, but this is a general definition of government that then leads to the next term.
- Politics: The process of organizing people, resources, power, decision-making and decision-implementing in a political unit. So how does a group or unit of people organize themselves, manage resources, allocate power, make and implement decisions in their collective organization.
- Christian: This seems simple, even unnecessary to define, but there are tons of ways I see the word Christian used in my country that are not at all correct, particularly in the realm of politics. The same goes for all sorts of things around the world labeled Christian. So what is a Christian? I believe based on God's Word, a Christian is a Bible-believing, gospel-embracing follower of Jesus. A Christian believes all of the Bible is the Word of God; embraces salvation from God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. They don't just believe Jesus in their heads; they follow with their lives.
- Church (Universal): The body of Christ which includes Christians from every tribe, tongue, people and nation across time. So all Christians from everywhere and from any age.
- Church (Local): A group of baptized Christians who are committed to being the body of Christ to one another by coming together regularly and carrying out the functions of a biblical church. I would describe these functions as:

Biblical Preaching and Teaching	Biblical Fellowship
Biblical Prayer	Biblical Accountability and Discipline
Biblical Evangelism	Biblical Worship
Biblical Discipleship	Biblical Ordinances
Biblical Membership	Biblical Giving
Biblical Leadership	Biblical Mission

So a local church is a group of Christians committed to doing these things together as a body.

I'm going to use these definitions during our time together tonight. I'll try to be careful to give definition for other words that might have different meanings. You might get tired of me saying, "What I mean by that is..." but it's really important to clarify what I mean by words or phrases.

Think about **the flexibility of language**. Think beyond just words to phrases, sentences, questions, statements. For example, what if I were to ask these questions:

- “Is the United States a Christian nation?” How would you answer that? I would answer that differently based on what you mean by the question. If you mean, “Did many of the founders of the United States generally believe the Bible?” I think that answer is yes. But that doesn’t mean they were all Christians by any means.
- Or maybe you meant, “Did Christian beliefs provide the foundation for many of the cultural values still held by many citizens of the United States today?” The answer to that question could be yes or no. In one sense, yes; many cultural values held in the founding of the United States were Christian in nature. But for far too many years in the founding and history of the United States, those Christian cultural values only applied to white people—not to native Americans who were already living here and certainly not to African slaves who were brought here.
- So we need to ask, “How truly Christian were those beliefs in the founding of our country?” Without question, founders wrote down, “All men are created equal...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights...” But white men who drafted those words did not apply them to hundreds of thousands of black people in their midst, or women for that matter. That doesn’t sound very Christian.
- When you ask, “Is the United States a Christian nation?” if you mean, “Is Christianity of various sorts, very broadly defined—not like we defined it earlier—the largest religion in the United States?” Yes.
- But if you mean, “Does the United States government promote Christianity as the national religion? Does a person have to profess Christian faith in order to have the rights of a citizen of the United States?” the answer is no, absolutely not.
- “Are a majority of people in the United States Bible-believing, gospel-embracing followers of Jesus (i.e., Christians)?” No.
- “Is belief in Christian values the dominant perspective promoted by the government, the media and universities in the United States today?” No.

So is the United States a Christian nation? Well, it depends on what you mean when you ask or say that. When I travel around the world, I meet Muslims who say, “We have no respect for Christianity, because we see the United States—a ‘Christian country’—but there’s so much sexual immodesty and immorality spreading from your country.” I immediately say, “Don’t think the United States is a Christian country.”

That’s the point here. Flexibility in language is so important to understand because when we make various statements, we need to consider what those words mean to other people. This is going to be so important throughout this evening. Let me give you one more example,

“Did God call {INSERT ANY NAME} to be President/Prime Minister/Leader of {INSERT ANY NATION}?” Let’s do some insertions.

- Did God call or even appoint Abiy Ahmed to be Prime Minister of Ethiopia?
- Did God call or appoint Vladimir Putin to be President of Russia?
- Did God call or appoint Kim Jong-un to be leader of North Korea?
- Did God call or appoint Angela Merkel to be Chancellor of Germany?
- Did God call or appoint Donald Trump to be president of the United States?

How do you answer these questions? Well, what do we mean when we ask them? Do we mean is God ultimately sovereign over any leader who governs any nation? Yes, absolutely He is. We’re about to see in Scripture that God raises up leaders and God deposes leaders. He is ultimately sovereign over who

leads any country, including who is president of the United States, whether it was Barak Obama or George Bush in the past, Donald Trump in the present or whoever will come in the future.

But that's a different question than, "Does God personally endorse every leader who governs every nation?" No, absolutely not. "Does God personally endorse Kim Jung-un as leader of North Korea?" I think there's a sense in which we would all say no. "Well then, what about Putin in Russia? Merkel in Germany? Ahmed in Ethiopia? Or Trump in the United States? For any of these leaders, does God endorse their words and behavior?" Some say, "No, but God endorses their policies." Which ones? All of them? Some of them? The ones we like?

I'm just asking questions here to help us see that when we say things as Christians about this or that leader being God's man or God's woman, other people—including a world of non-Christians—hear all kinds of things, many of which are very unhelpful and very unbiblical. When we're attaching the name of God to someone or something, we need to be really, really careful. We need to realize the flexibility of language.

Let's think about all **the challenges of communication** around us.

- When we need sustained dialogue, we have sound bites. We conduct conversations over Twitter.
- When we need thoughtful reasoning, we have emotional rants that are often one sided. Any one of us can get fired up, having imaginary dialogue with people who may think differently than we do. We can fire up all kinds of thoughts and ways we would never talk if we were sitting across the table having a thoughtful conversation that involved listening.
- When we need to listen first, our strategy today is that we try to speak louder. Whoever speaks the loudest or is the most obnoxious gets the most attention.

Let's define **the importance of context**, which is the part of a discourse that surrounds a word or passage, thus bringing light on its meaning. So if you say something in one context that is taken out of that context and put in a different context, it can mean something totally different. Take it from a preacher who has preached all kinds of sermons—and long sermons for that matter. I've seen a couple sentences taken out of a sermon or a letter, put into a video clip or article, then used to mean something I never intended it to mean. It would have been clear if it would have been seen or heard in the context of a long sermon.

Context matters, for example:

- **Physical**. If I say I'm going to play football here in the United States or I'm going to play football in Brazil, that's going to mean something very different.
- **Cultural**.
- **Social**.
- **Temporal**. Even tonight, speaking in the middle of a pandemic about "these days" sounds very different than when I was talking about "these days" a year ago.
- **Spiritual**. When I speak to a Christian audience that loves the gospel and I speak to a non-Christian audience that is opposed to the gospel, that matters.

In all of this, context is not always clearly defined. Even now as I'm speaking to a global audience where a word could mean all kinds of different things or be taken in different ways, context matters. Even here in the United States, we need to consider Caucasian, African-American, Asian-American, Native-

American, men or women. We all hear different things in different ways. So the more I walk through this, the more I think why did I take this on?!

Then we add on **the understanding of covenants**. So let me explain what I mean by that, then I'll tell you why it's really important. A Biblical covenant is a binding agreement between two or more parties, with God as the Guarantor and Enforcer of the agreement. We see agreements like this throughout Scripture:

- Genesis 1–11: God's covenants with all humanity.
- **The Adamic covenant** that describes God's creation of man and woman.
  - *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so (Genesis 1:26–30).*
  - *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:15–17).*

Then at the end of this chapter, we're introduced to the marriage covenant under God:

- *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).*

So Genesis 1 and 2 are describing a covenant of common grace, meaning a covenant with Adam and Eve as they represented all people, not just a special group of people. God calls all people to obey and walk with God, to enjoy and work the ground, as well as to multiply through marriage. [There it is: a little romance for this Friday night for those who are married—be fruitful and multiply. It's hard to tell a joke in this context when no one is sitting in front of me. It doesn't have the same affect.]

- This covenant with Adam then sets the same for **the Noahic covenant**. After the flood, God said similar words to what He said in Genesis 1:
  - *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his*



*own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.” Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:1–11).*

God goes on to establish the rainbow as the sign of this covenant, another covenant of common grace with every living creature and with an expectation of just governance. So God will require a reckoning for the man or woman who sheds the blood of another. We’ll talk more about this passage in a few minutes.

- *And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth” (Genesis 9:12-17).*

These two covenants between God and all humanity then lead to the rest of the Old Testament where we see God’s covenants with His people—the people of Israel. Starting in Genesis 12 and going all the way to Malachi 4 where the Old Testament ends.

- It starts with the Abrahamic covenant.
  - *Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1–3).*

Then Genesis 15 describes a covenant ceremony in which God promises to give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. He would be in a sense the father of God’s people. This was a covenant of special grace with the nation of Israel, meaning it was not a covenant with all people. Instead, this is what God required from His people, from Abraham, his son Isaac, then his son Jacob. God required faith and promised blessing, land, descendants and influence.

- *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the*

*Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites” (Genesis 15:1–21).*

- That then leads to **the Mosaic covenant**. These covenants build on each other as God bring Moses and the people of Israel to Mt. Sinai. God says to them:
  - *“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel” (Exodus 19:5–6).*
- After that we have the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:
  - *“And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter; your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the*

*mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was” (Exodus 20:1–17).*

- Then there was a covenant ceremony in Exodus 24. Look at the end of this passage that is underlined:
  - *Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words” (Exodus 24:3–8).*
- Later in Exodus 34,
  - *“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’ So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (Exodus 34:27–28).*
- So this was another covenant of special grace with the nation of Israel, not with all people. It required obedience amidst promises of God’s presence, protection and provision as God led them to the Promised Land.
- Once settled in the Promised Land, we see the Davidic Covenant that builds on the Mosaic covenant as God establishes David as king.
  - *Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.” But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’” Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I*

*will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’” In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David” (2 Samuel 7:1–17).*

- *You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations’” (Psalm 89:3–4).*
- *I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, “You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.” And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens. If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies (Psalm 89:20–37).*
- This was another covenant of special grace with the nation of Israel that included a promise of a royal line that will last forever. Look at the last two sentences from Psalm 89. This was God’s special covenant with Israel, not every nation. This was God’s special covenant with David, not with every leader or king. Through David’s line this would happen and would endure forever.
- That then leads to the New Testament where we see God’s covenant with the church, known as **the new covenant**. This covenant had been prophesied and promised in Jeremiah and all kinds of other places. Remember that “testament” is another word for covenant, so this is why we have the Old Testament filled with these old covenants; then the New Testament marked by the new covenant.
  - *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, “Know*

*the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31–34).*

- This is why Jesus chooses the language of new covenant when He prepares to go to the cross. He takes a piece of bread and the cup, then says:
  - “...for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).
- Looking back at that moment, Paul uses the same wording:
  - “In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’” (1 Corinthians 11:25).
- So the new covenant would not be based on obedience to God’s Word, which no sinner could do completely. He said the new covenant was based on the blood of God’s Son, shed on behalf of sinners so they might be forgiven of all their sin.
  - *But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah . . .” (Hebrews 8:6–8).*
  - *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away (Hebrews 8:13).*
- This verse is talking about Jesus:
  - “Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (Hebrews 9:15).

So this was the covenant of saving grace for the church in **all** nations, for **all** people anywhere who trust in Jesus, what He did on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. **All** people can now be saved, not based on what they do but faith on what God has done.

Salvation through Jesus Who is described in the New Testament—the new covenant—as the new Adam, the righteous Judge, the seed of Abraham, the fulfillment of the law and the King from David’s line. Jesus is the fulfillment of all these pictures and promises in the Old Testament—the old covenant—as you’ll see in all these passages we’ve listed here:

- *For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).*
- *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land (Jeremiah 23:5).*
- *Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).*
- *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17).*

- *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end* (Luke 1:32–33).

So why is all of this important when we're thinking about politics and government? Well, follow me here. Think about **understanding covenants today**. How do these covenants, which are so central to the whole story of the Bible, affect our lives today?

First, God's covenants with all humanity still apply to all people in all nations. Nothing in the Bible says otherwise, which means God gives grace to all people, not just some people. He gives life, breath, gifts, skills and resources by His grace to all people, even to people who hate or deny Him. God calls all people to obey and walk with Him; to work in this world; to multiply through marriage between a man and a woman. He calls all people in all nations to just governance. All of these things, as we'll see, affect the way we should think about government.

But what about God's covenants with Israel then? Good question. God's covenants with Israel do not still apply in the same way to all people or to any nation. They never applied to all people, just the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Even when we think about Israel today as a nation state, there are various differences from the people of Israel in the Old Testament. That's whole long theological discussion we could get into, but we won't tonight.

Laws and structures of governance were given to the specific nation of Israel in the Old Testament, which is why we don't obey this verse. God does not require you or me to make a parapet on our roofs today, here or in the nation of Israel for that matter.

- *When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it* (Deuteronomy 22:8).

Laws and structures of governance are not given to any specific nation in the New Testament, which is why we have to be careful, whenever we see a command or promise to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, to not immediately jump and apply that to any nation today. This next verse might be one of the most common examples of this, when God said the following to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. These verses are so often quoted as if God promised the exact same thing to the United States more than 2,000 years later, or to any other nation. But God did not give this promise to the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. God gave this promise to the people of Israel hundreds of years before Jesus even came.

- *When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land* (2 Chronicles 7:13–14).

Now, is it a good thing to pray, seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways? Absolutely, we need to do that. But does that mean God is going to give harvest to farms across the United States after that? No, not necessarily. To make it more applicable, does this mean if we do this in the United States, then Covid-19 will automatically leave our country? No, not necessarily. That promise has not been given to any nation today. God's covenants with Israel do not still apply in the same way to all people or to any nation.

At the same time, God's covenant with the church—the new covenant—applies to all Christians in every nation. So this is the picture we have in the new covenant. Promises that apply to all Christians, regardless of their country.

God calls the church in the New Testament—made up of many nations—to obey everything Christ has commanded us. This is the great commission and the key is what Jesus has commanded us to do:

- *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:19–20).

Unless an Old Testament commandment is somehow restated or reinforced in the New Testament, it is no longer binding for Christians. This is why we don't obey several civil laws about houses or ceremonial laws about cleanliness that we see in Leviticus, but we do obey commands like this one, because Jesus reinforced this command in the New Testament:

- *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD* (Leviticus 19:18).

All of this is really important to be we don't misunderstand the Bible and don't start applying certain promises from the Old Testament to our government or nation when those promises or commands were not given to our government or our nation. I remember being in a meeting with leaders from many different churches. One of those leaders stood up and started talking about how we need to apply Old Testament laws to the United States, how we need to mandate the worship of God like the king of Israel did. As we'll see, that is not what the Bible is calling any of our governments to do. We need to make sure we see God's commands and promises as not just given to one nation or one government, but to all people in all nations who trust in Jesus. Understanding the Bible and covenants in the Bible rightly has a huge effect on how we understand government today.

That leads to the abuse of Scripture in other ways, the temptation to add or take away from the Bible, trying to speak with authority where the Bible has not spoken or to reject the authority of the Bible altogether.

- *And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you* (Deuteronomy 4:1–2).
- We must reject liberal distortions of Scripture. As soon as I say that, you're writing it down, so let me clarify what I mean. I'm not using liberal politically here but theologically.
  - *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths* (2 Timothy 4:3–4).
- We must be able to discern theological liberalism when people call themselves Christians, yet deny Scripture and orthodox teaching on the primary doctrines of Christianity. (We did a whole Secret Church on counterfeit gospels in 2018 and theological liberalism is one of those. To read

more, visit [https://radical.net/secret\\_church/secret-church-18-cults-and-counterfeit-gospels/](https://radical.net/secret_church/secret-church-18-cults-and-counterfeit-gospels/)). Again, much in the United States and around the world is labeled Christian that is not Christian, that is not Bible believing. There are all kinds of Christian denominations, organizations and people who deny the truth and authority of the Bible, picking and choosing which parts to keep and which parts to throw away.

- *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ (Galatians 1:6–10).*
- “Despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology, modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions.” – J. Gresham Machen
- This often happens in an attempt to adapt to a changing culture or appeal to an increasing non-Christian culture. What the Bible teaches about marriage or sexuality is unpopular in the culture, then we either twist what the Bible says to fit our culture or we disregard what the Bible says about marriage or sexuality altogether.
- This often happens with language that appears to be Biblical (though it undercuts Scripture) and claims to be new and contemporary (though it rehashes old heresies).

In essence what’s happening here is theological liberalism that:

- Denies the final authority of God’s Word.
- Denies God’s supernatural work in history.
- Explains away miracle stories in the Bible as metaphors.
- Denies the seriousness of sin before a holy God.
- Denies Biblical teaching on the person and work of Christ—Who Jesus is and what He has done.
- Denies Biblical teaching on judgment and eternity.
- Denies Biblical teachings that become unpopular or ridiculed, which is why you’ll often hear theological liberalism called progressive. Again, I’m using that term theologically—theologically progressive, claiming, “We’ve moved on from what Christians used to believe. Those ideas are antiquated; we are contemporary.”
- Denies consistent teachings throughout church history. Over the last decade in the United States, so many churches have left what Christians have believed for 2,000 years about marriage and sexuality. They do this in the name of more progressive and newer ideas.

We must reject liberal distortions of Scripture!

We must remember the primary function of Scripture to avoid abusing it.

- *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (2 Peter 1:3–4).*
- The Bible was not written to answer every specific political question we have.



- The Bible was not written to address every specific political situation we face. The Bible is not a handbook for 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens of any country on gun control regulations, graduated tax rates, immigration restrictions, tariff rules—that’s not the purposed of the Bible.
- The Bible was written to reveal Who God is, who we are and how we can be redeemed by God’s grace through God’s Son for God’s glory. (We did a whole Secret Church on this as well. Visit [https://radical.net/secret\\_church/secret-church-10-crucifixion-salvation-and-the-glory-of-god/](https://radical.net/secret_church/secret-church-10-crucifixion-salvation-and-the-glory-of-god/).)
- When you look through all the verses below, you’ll see a summary of why we have the Bible. From cover to cover, it is inspired by God Himself. Start in Genesis 1-2, go all the way to Revelation 22 and you’ll see the purpose of the Bible is clear. It was written to restore us to God and conform our lives into the image of Jesus. That is the purpose of the Bible, which means we need to be careful not to twist the Bible to do that which God never intended it to do. It was not meant to address every specific political question we have or address every specific political situation we face. There is not a verse where God says, “Vote for this person.” Instead, we have something far better. We have a whole book that is intended to make us look more like Jesus which will then affect who we vote for in any country at any time, how we answer political questions and how we view political issues.
  - *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16–17).
  - *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth* (Genesis 1:1).
  - *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them* (Genesis 1:26–27).
  - *Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life* (Genesis 3:22–24)
  - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more* (Revelation 21:1).
  - *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever* (Revelation 22:1–5).
  - *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit* (2 Corinthians 3:18).
  - *... and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator* (Colossians 3:10).

- *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).*

This leads to the next point in our study guide:

- We must prioritize accurate interpretation of Scripture, meaning we must guard against making the Bible say things that God has not said.
  - *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).*
- When we come to Scripture, we need to ask, “What does it say?”—not “What do I want it to say?”
- Ask, “What does it mean to all people of all time?”—not “What does it mean to me?” as if each one of us has our own personal meaning of Scripture. That’s what leads to theological liberalism.

Without question, the meaning of Scripture applies to our lives in different ways. So yes, we must recognize varied applications of Scripture. As we read God's Word, James 1 tells us to put it into practice.

- *Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing (James 1:21–25).*

This is where things get complicated among Bible believing Christians, because in all our attempts to apply Scripture to our lives and the world around us, we often have differences. This has been the case from the earliest days of the church. Here are two examples, first from the Jerusalem Council where there was a debate among Jewish Christians about how to receive Gentile Christians into the church. Different followers of Jesus had different ideas. They worked together and came to this conclusion:

- *The differences among Christians. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell (Acts 15:28–29).*

Then later in the same chapter, Paul and Barnabas are about to set out on a second missionary journey together. They have a disagreement about whether or not to take John Mark with them. That disagreement actually leads them to separate from each other. So we see differences among Christians from the very beginning and up to today.

- *Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches (Acts 15:37–41).*

Remember the definition of Christians—Bible believing, gospel embracing followers of Jesus. They have differences on different levels. Those differences are sometimes political, other times social, sometimes generational, certainly racial with different ethnicities, as well as experiential. Different followers of

Jesus have experienced different things in our lives that affect who we are, how we act, react, think and speak. It affects how we make decisions. When there are differences in the church, if we're not careful, that can lead to...

### **Disunity of the church.**

- In John 17, Jesus prays for unity in the church, that His followers would be one just as He and the Father are one—like a supernatural unity that we would experience with each other. So how do we experience that kind of unity as followers of Jesus when we have so many differences? When we're prone to disagreements, particularly when it comes to political issues?
- Throughout the history of the church, Christians have recognized the need for theological triage. This is the need to discern which theological and Biblical issues are most important and which are less important, so we can unite around certain truths, then agree to disagree on more minor issues.
- First, we think about what is primary—that which is essential for Christianity. We don't say, "It doesn't matter what you believe; we're unified together." No, it does matter what you believe and if you don't believe certain truths then you're not a Christian.
- So Christians—Bible-believing, gospel-embracing followers of Jesus—divide from non-Christians over primary doctrines that are clear in Scripture and essential to Christianity. Christians are willing to die for these doctrines. Think about authority, inerrancy or truthfulness of the Bible. There's no room for division there. Think about the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Think about our sinfulness before God; our need for salvation; the humanity and divinity of Jesus; the cross and resurrection of Jesus; salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. We must agree on all these things to be Christian. We divide from non-Christians over these primary doctrines that are clear in Scripture and essential to Christianity; we give our lives for these truths.
- Then there are doctrines that are secondary, meaning they are essential for local church, but non-essential for Christianity. Christians distinguish themselves from one another over secondary doctrines that are less clear in Scripture and non-essential to Christianity. While these distinctions may mean less fellowship with one another in their churches, these Christians are glad to still partner together around primary doctrines.
  - An example of this would be baptism. Some people believe that church should baptize infants; some believe the church should only baptize professing believers in Jesus. Now, we could spend a lot of time tonight talking about which of these positions is right and if we did that, it would be crystal clear that we should not baptize infants. But Presbyterian brothers and sisters would disagree. Does that mean they are not Christians? No, many Presbyterians embrace Jesus and the same core truths of Christianity that I do, but we're not going to be in the same local church because of the way we understand baptism.
  - So the way we understand baptism is less clear than, for example, how we view the cross and resurrection of Jesus. How we view baptism is not essential to being a Christian, so we still share fellowship with a broader universal church, where we work together for the spread of the gospel, but we won't be in the same local church.
  - Church government would be another example of a secondary doctrine. It's not that secondary doctrines are unimportant; they are just not as important—they are not essential to Christianity.

- That then leads to tertiary doctrine which is non-essential for Christianity and for local churches. So Christians disagree among themselves over tertiary doctrines that are even less clear in Scripture and also non-essential to Christianity, yet Christians experience close fellowship with one another in the same local church despite their disagreement.
- So we would put in this category what one believes about the millennium—the thousand-year reign of Jesus described in Revelation. Many Christians in the same church may have different understandings of that passage, but that doesn't mean we divide in the church over it. We don't have to agree about everything to be in the same local church. Instead we need to have agreement about primary and secondary doctrines, then agree to disagree on this third level.
- So we guard our unity together in the church by triaging different doctrines.

So how might this same concept then apply to politics? This is where I want to submit the need in the church for political triage. I'm going to use two levels here:

- Primary: That which is essential to the integrity of Christian faith and practice. So Christians—Bible-believing, gospel-embracing followers of Jesus—divide over political positions of primary magnitude that are clear in Scripture and essential to Christianity, and for those who don't share these political positions, it is questionable if they are Christians and is likely cause for church excommunication. That is loaded, serious language and it's intended to be that way. We should divide from other Christians over issues that rise to a certain level, which begs the question, "What issues rise to that level?" Well here are some clear ones that come to my mind from history:
  - Support of the Nazi party
  - Participation in the Ku Klux Klan
  - The kinds of things about which a church should say, "If you're doing these things, you're not following Jesus." Therefore we should carry out a process of church discipline where we talk with that person one-on-one with Scripture. If they still continue unrepentant in that which goes directly against God's Word, we would involve their small group leaders. If they continue, we would then remove them from the church.
- Now, those issues seem really clear from history, but what about today? What about a contemporary public, overt demonstration of racism? What about advocating or working for the abortion of babies? What about advocating or promoting so-called same-sex marriage? Based on the Bible, I and the church I pastor would label these things as sin. If someone continues in clear, unrepentant sin, even when lovingly confronted by the church over the course of time, and there would come a point when someone who is continually participating in abortions, continually promoting so-called same-sex marriage or continually participating in overt, public demonstrations of racism and they are unrepentant in that, they would be removed from the church. These matters are clear in Scripture and essential in Christianity. Christians believe every single person, regardless of ethnicity, is made in the image of God and deserves honor as God's image bearers. Christians believe every single child is molded by God in their mother's womb and must be protected. Christians believe that marriage is between a man and a woman, an institution defined by God from the beginning of time.
- Now let me add a caveat here. Not every Christian is at the same level of maturity. Not every Christian in the church automatically embraces everything the Bible teaches, which is why we have a process through which we open God's Word together, see what God's Word says and then live according to it. An exclusion from the church only happens after a process, at the end of

which someone says, “I don’t believe God’s Word or I don’t want to follow God’s Word.” There are a million other caveats I could give to questions you might be wondering about, but I think they will unfold over the course of the night.

- Let me go ahead and give you the secondary level of political triage, then I want you to think about why this is so important. So there is a primary level—that which is essential to the integrity of Christian faith and practice. Then there is a secondary—that which is not essential to the integrity of Christian faith and practice. This is where Christians can agree to disagree. Christians disagree over political positions of secondary magnitude that are less clear in Scripture and not essential to Christianity. While these Christians may remain together in the same church, these differences may mean less partnership with one another in the political arena, even as these Christians are glad to still stand together around political issues of primary magnitude. Every word there is important.

Let me illustrate with an example from the 2016 election in the United States. Americans had two main candidates to choose from: Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. During that election, people said and wrote, “You cannot be a Christian and vote for Hillary Clinton.” Others said and wrote, “You cannot be a Christian and vote for Donald Trump.” Now both of those statements are quite serious and if you’re going to make either statement, that means you would be willing to say, “Anyone who voted for \_\_\_\_ cannot be a Christian. You are sinning in such a way that you should not even be considered a member of the church, the body and bride of Christ.” If you’re going to say that, where are you finding that in Scripture? Where is your Biblical basis for removing someone from the church, either officially or just in your language?

Take another example. We mentioned racism earlier. No Christian should be part of the Ku Klux Klan or anything like it, but someone might say, “What about House Resolution 743 (I’m just making up that number, by the way) that contains language that leads to racism?” As we’re going to see tonight, that’s where we need to be really careful. Are we willing to say someone should be removed from the church? That they should be identified not as a follower of Jesus, not as a brother or sister in Christ if they support House Resolution 743?

The point is, there must be room in any local church for Christians to disagree over political positions that are not clear in Scripture and not essential to Christianity. Those disagreements may mean we vote for different candidates or that we support different policies at different times. We may do so passionately, hopefully based on Biblical principles. The goal is this would be the case for all of us, but we’ll still disagree on secondary issues even as we unite over core theological truths and political positions that are clear in Scripture and essential to Christianity.

So obviously, maintaining this kind of unity necessitates that we clearly define where Scripture has spoken and where Scripture has not spoken. That’s what so much of tonight is about, so we can have things in the right categories.

So what I’m trying to do here is put on the table a serious caution in our speech. Be careful not to say, “You can’t be a Christian and vote for \_\_\_\_” or “You can’t be a Christian and support \_\_\_\_” or “You can’t be a Christian and think \_\_\_\_.” However we fill in those blanks, we better make sure we have a clear, explicit, rock-solid, unambiguous biblical basis for that. We need to ask, “Would we remove someone from the body of Christ over this?”

In the end, here is a guiding principle for partnership:

- In essentials, unity. We unite over that which is theologically essential for Christians, then on a different level regarding what is essential for local churches. Politically, we unite over that which is essential for Bible-believing, gospel-embracing followers of Jesus.
- In non-essentials, liberty. As we're going to see in the Bible, we live in a fallen world; none of us have it all right, so on non-essentials we give freedom to each other as we figure out how to apply God's truth in the time and place in which we live.
- In all things, charity. We love one another.

Now, start putting all of this together and you may want to avoid politics all together!

**The avoidance of politics** is maybe an option that comes to mind, but it's not an option biblically. If you've done Secret Church before, you're going to notice something somewhat different tonight. In addition to Scripture, I usually include a lot of quotation from different people who help us understand various truths, but tonight I'm using very few quotations from others. Mainly because I just want us to hear from God amidst a sea of political opinions. I don't want to side with this camp or that camp; I want to be faithful to God's Word alone. But this is one of the places where I've included a quotation and there's a reason why. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote a letter from the Birmingham jail when racism was reeling in the south. He wrote,

“In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted 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.’”

In other words, white churches and white ministers were saying, “We should avoid politics,” even as their black brothers and sisters were being unjustly treated and thrown in jail. No, we don't have the option of avoiding politics.

- Avoiding politics is disobedient toward God, based on Jesus' command in the Great Commission and elsewhere in the New Testament:
  - *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:19–20).
  - *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Matthew 22:39).
  - *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).

Remember, politics is how we organize people, resources, power, decision making, decision implementing in a unit. How we do politics is going to affect people. How we do politics is going to affect whether we're loving toward people or unloving toward people. How we do politics will either be just or unjust, so we can't follow Jesus and avoid issues of love and justice in the time and place in which we live.

Avoiding politics is disobedient to God, unloving toward others and impossible in this world.  
Remember, as we've defined politics, it affects all lives and many facets of our lives in this world.  
We have to think politically about systems and structures that affect the way we survive and live together.

On one hand, we have to beware of the avoidance of politics, then on the other hand we have to beware of **the idolatry of politics**. Here are 13 questions to ask yourself honestly to discern if there is any idolatry of politics in your heart and mind. Most of you would say you don't idolize politics, but just ask yourself:

1. Do you ever find your hope tied to the success of a particular politician or political party? If so, you may be idolizing politics.
2. Do you ever see a politician or political party you support as practically perfect? Such that your default has become whatever they say you support, instead of whatever God says you support. Only He deserves that.
3. Do you ever struggle to stop, hear and understand why your political opponent holds his or her position? Do you ever stop and ask why they believe that? Is there any merit in it at all?
4. Do you ever struggle to admit when your political opponent is right? Do you ever get mad when you realize your political opponent is right about something?
5. Do you ever side with your political party without thinking through a specific issue from a biblical perspective? Do you ever think, "Well, this party or person is saying it so it's probably right," without first going to Scripture and asking what is right? Are you slow to hold the politician or political party you support accountable when what they are saying or doing does not align with Scripture? Basically, do you pounce on your political opponent while giving your political ally a pass?
6. Do politics capture an irresponsible amount of your thoughts or emotions? I use the word irresponsible here because I think about politicians and the church I pastor. We have lots of people who work in government who are going to spend a lot of time thinking about politics—it's their job so that's not irresponsible. But they still need to be responsible in the way they think about it and how much they think about their job. And those of us for whom this is not our job, we want to be responsible. It's going to look different for different people.
7. Do politics ever steal your joy? Is your joy grounded in politics or Jesus?
8. Is your political speech more kind and honorable? Or more harsh and hostile?
9. Are your political thoughts more kind and honorable? Or more harsh and hostile? That which no one else sees and knows but God.
10. Do you ever hate sin in those you oppose politically, but excuse sin in those you support politically? Let me give some data on this one; this is not my opinion but straight data. Before the 2012 election in the United States, 70% of white evangelical protestants said that an elected official's personal character was critical to their ability to govern ethically. Four years later, before the 2016 election, that number had dropped from 70% to 30%. Basically, white evangelical protestants totally shifted on how they view personal character in political candidates.
11. Do you ever speak or stand against sin in those you oppose politically, but sit or stay quiet about sin in those you support politically? More importantly, do you ever hate sin in those you support politically, but excuse sin in yourself?
12. Do you ever forget that those you oppose (or support) politically are sinners in need of a Savior? Do you ever neglect to pray for them and share the gospel with them accordingly?
13. Do you ever experience disunity with Christian brothers and sisters over secondary political issues?

Even as I ask these questions, I can only imagine what some of you are thinking. Some of you feel targeted, or if you're honest find yourself getting a little defensive. Others may feel justified, like, "Yeah. I'm glad he asked that question for those people." I want to encourage all of us to drop our defenses and lay aside our comparison, honestly evaluating our hearts. We all—including myself—need to make sure that Jesus alone reigns supreme in our lives and that politics does not have an unhealthy place in our hearts.

We need to guard our love for Christ and unity in the church, especially when we consider **the polarization of positions** around us. We live in a world that wants to divide us...

- Among parties.
- Across countries where we're governed by divisive leaders who try to put us all in ideological silos filled with reckless generalizations. "Oh, those people all believe this. All these people believe that."
- They give broad condemnation of entire groups of people or individuals without even giving them a hearing.
- Politics is a game to be won.
- Contempt for your opponent—for people made in God's image—is the strategy to pursue.
- Compromise is the weakness to avoid. Don't compromise!
- Opponents are enemies to be defeated.

This is the political climate in which we live. If we're not careful as Christians, we will become part of it. And not just the polarization of positions, but **the demonization of opponents** which can then...

- Turn thoughtful discussions about issues into critical accusations toward people.
- Turn political dialogue into personal ridicule.
- Turn healthy disagreement into hostile (even hateful) disgust, evident in everything from what we post on social media, cable news broadcasts we listen to, dinner conversations we have and hidden thoughts we harbor.

Beware of **the danger of pride**. God help us to hear this exhortation to become like Jesus. God, give us humility like Jesus in the political sphere.

- *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:1–11).*
- God, guard us each from thinking we have it all right, thinking that others have it all wrong. Guard us from being quick to accuse others (even if only in our minds). Guard us from being quick to defend ourselves (even if only in our minds).



- Guard us from valuing our rights over what's right, valuing acceptance in government over obedience to God.
- Guard us from fearing what people think or ignoring what people need, just looking out for ourselves.
- Guard us from failing to love our neighbor as ourselves. God, help us not to prioritize policies that help us while ignoring policies that help others.
- Guard us from failing to love our enemy.
- Keep us refusing to hear and learn from others. God, make us quick to listen and slow to speak. Most of all make us quick to listen to You.
- Guard us from refusing to hear and obey You above all.
  - *But this command I gave them: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (Jeremiah 7:23).*

**Our purpose tonight.** So here's how I would summarize our aim together in this Secret Church. With all the landmines above, I want more than anything else **to hear clearly what God has said in His Word about government.** I love this passage where God is speaking to the people of Israel, telling them they will know wisdom when they hear His Word—and not just hear it but to post it everywhere.

- *See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:5–8).*
- *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:6–9).*

Lord, may Your Word be what our dinner conversations are about. May Your Word be what is going through our minds all the time. May Your Word be what we're posting about. Let it be everywhere. We desperately need to hear what You are saying in Your Word about all things, including government.

- **To understand how the gospel relates to government.** I love this verse in Philippians which we will see again later. Paul is talking here about our lives as citizens here on this earth. He says:
  - *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.... (Philippians 1:27).*
- May that be true in any country; may we live our lives worthy of the gospel. We need to understand how the gospel relates to government and...

- To understand how the gospel is good news for government. How the gospel transforms people's lives to be salt and light in the world around us. So our purpose tonight is to hear clearly what God has said in His Word about government.
- *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14–16).*

**To distinguish carefully between God's Word and our wisdom regarding government.** So in a 2 Timothy 4 kind of way, I want to preach the Word and at the same time, in a Proverbs 1 kind of way, exhort us to know wisdom and instruction.

- *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths (2 Timothy 4:1–4).*
- *The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth. Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:1–7).*

Now when I say distinguish carefully between God's Word and our wisdom, here's what I mean. I've borrowed the following diagram from Jonathan Leeman, a fellow pastor/elder here in Metro DC who has written extensively on this topic. This is a chart he uses that I find really helpful.

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <span><b>God's Word</b></span> <span>↔</span> <span><b>Our Wisdom</b></span> </div>	
<b>“Rules of the Game”</b>	<b>“Strategy for the Game”</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biblically mandated</li> <li>• Direct, straight line to positions and policies</li> <li>• Binding on a Christian's conscience— “must do”</li> <li>• Clear and unchanging across cultures and times</li> <li>• Firm Grip / Closed Hand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biblically informed</li> <li>• Indirect, jagged line to positions and policies</li> <li>• Freedom in a Christian's conscience— “can do”</li> <li>• Complex calculations in various cultures and times</li> <li>• Loose Grip / Open Hand</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">The diagrams and images used in this Study Guide are adapted from Jonathan Leeman's course titled "Christians and Government" at 9marks.org.</p>	

When you think of God's Word, think about the rules of the game—that which is biblically mandated, such as “Thou shalt not murder.” That's biblically mandated by God. “Do justice”—also biblically mandated by God. “Love your neighbor as yourself”—these commands are clear in Scripture. Think in a direct, straight line to positions and policies, meaning it's pretty clear to go from ‘thou shalt not murder’

directly to ‘we should have laws against murder in our country.’ Or ‘all people are made in God’s image’ so yes, we should not have laws that discriminate between people based on race or ethnicity.

God's Word is binding on a Christian's conscience so a Christian must do or not do certain things according to God's Word. These things are clear and unchanging across cultures and times, regardless of what culture, country or time period you live in. God's Word stays the same which means we hold God's Word and His mandate with a firm grip, a closed hand. We don't hold loosely here.

Then on the other hand there are issues of human wisdom. Every Christian is trying to apply God's Word every day in the time and place in which we live, to all kinds of decisions we make. God's Word doesn't tell us everything we need to do, like what to eat for breakfast, lunch or dinner. There are all kinds of decisions we make every day in our work, homes, lives, families for which God's Word does not give specific instructions, like whether or not to send this email, post that comment, make this decision about our finances, talk to this person about that issue. Our goal everyday is to make wise decisions that are based on God's Word, even when those decisions are not mandated in God's Word.

So when it comes to our wisdom, instead of rules of the game, think more strategy for the game. Instead of that which is biblically mandated, think of that which is biblically informed. Which means, thinking of political positions and policies, sometimes there's a direct, straight line from God's Word to a position or policy. Take what the Bible says about marriage for example. But there are also issues which involve indirect, jagged lines to positions and politics. For example, tax rates or corporate regulations. Again, we want our thinking about these things to be biblically informed, but there's not a biblical mandate for tax rates in 21<sup>st</sup> century America or Australia. This means there's freedom in the Christians' conscience, so Christians can do certain things or not do other things in their effort to obey that which is clearly commanded by Christ.

Making decisions like this often involves complex calculations in various cultures at various times. It's not easy; there are so many different political positions and policies that are not black and white, not crystal clear, in light of what the Bible says to do. But you want to be wise; you want to make a biblically-informed decision that may involve complex calculations and even a bit of uncertainty which is why we hold these positions with more of a loose grip or open hand.

So my purpose for laying out this chart is simply to give us different categories. This goes back to what we were talking about earlier regarding political triage. There are issues of government and politics that are clearly spelled out in God's Word, mandated by God Himself. We hold tightly there. But there are so many other issues in government or politics that necessitate wisdom based on God's Word. We may actually come to different conclusions as Christians about those things and there's freedom for that, supposing that we're all working prayerfully to apply God's Word as wisely as possible in the world in which we live.

The key is we need to distinguish carefully when we're advocating for something straight from God's Word—biblically mandated—or when we're advocating for something we believe is wise and Biblically informed, but not in God's Word. Again, just think about the examples we had of who to vote for or whether or not to support House Resolution #743. We want to make wise biblically-informed decisions, but we want to be careful not to put things in the category of biblical mandates that we must do if God has not said we must do that in His Word.

Then as we hold tightly to God's Word and work hard to live wisely based upon it, that leads to our third purpose tonight: **To unite joyfully around God's Word in the church as we work charitably according to our wisdom in the world.** In the church I pastor and for us in the broader church, I want us to unite joyfully around God's Word. There are so many appeals to unity throughout Scripture like these:

- *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore (Psalm 133:1–3).*
- *I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10).*
- *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:1–6).*
- *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind (1 Peter 3:8).*

God, give us all these things in Your church.

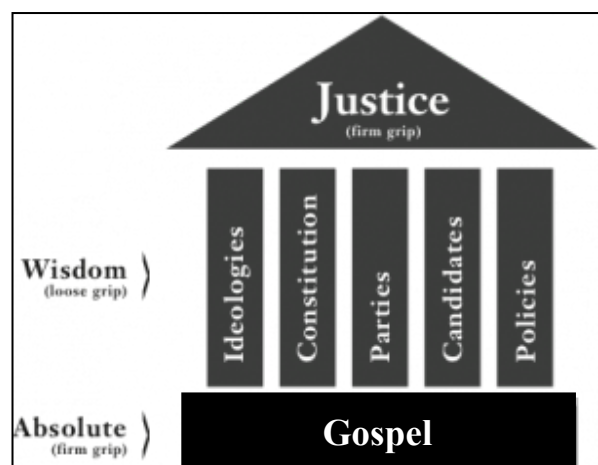
This is not just a flaky, flabby unity, meaning we don't agree on anything. No, I'm talking about a fervent, unshakable unity that means we agree on what is most important, what we know in God's Word, even as we charitably and lovingly work together to apply His Word in wise ways in the world. How do we do that?

The fourth purpose I want us to see tonight is that God has called us **to live justly, love kindness and walk humbly with God in our nations,** whatever nation in which we live—straight from Micah 6:8, straight from the mouth of God:

- *To live justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with God in our nation. 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).*

Here's another from Jonathan Leeman chart that I've modified slightly and hope it envisions how God has called us to live. See, our foundation is in the gospel and the truths of God's Word that we hold tightly to together. Then we are to apply them with wisdom in our lives to political ideologies, for the way we constitute as citizens of countries, the way we think about political candidates and policies.

By the way, I should say that I know I'm speaking



here from an American point of view; many of you live as citizens of other countries where there may not be political parties, or where they are shaped differently. So I apologize in advance; you've already seen that many of my examples are from living in my own country, but I also want to draw attention throughout the night from other countries and how to apply this there. All that to say, your government has political parties. How do you wisely operate in that kind of system according to the gospel? How do you think about political candidates if that's even applicable where you live? How do you think about government policies, all to the end that we do justice?

So my hope walking away from tonight is that you'll be compelled to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God and your nation.

Then flowing from that, our next purpose is that we will **live zealously for the spread of God's love and the glory of God's name among all nations**. God's Word is clear that none of us should be concerned only about glorifying God in our nation. We are all created to spread the glory of God to all nations, to all peoples—that's what we're living for. In the words of Jesus, *"this gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come"* (Matthew 24:14), which is why He gave us this command to make disciples of all nations with the goal of all history being one day heaven singing a new song according to Revelation 5.

- *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:18–20).
- *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth"* (Revelation 5:9–10).

Yes! That is the goal. Citizens of different nations living and dying for the spread of Christ's ransom and the reception of His ransom among all that nations, for the fame of Christ's name among all the peoples. So how do we live in each of our nations with that end in mind? That's what Secret Church is all about.

So here's our plan for the rest of the night. We'll start with four major movements:

- **Gospel Foundations** – that we hold on to with a firm grip, that we live and die for, using the graphic we just looked at as the basis of it all. We will actually hit these pretty swiftly.
- **Biblical Truths** – this will be the bulk of the night, specifically looking at 64 biblical truths. We're going to spend time walking through Scripture, from cover to cover. We're going to see in God's Word if have wise, biblically-informed views of government, politics, political issues and political candidates. These are 64 truths straight from God's Word that should inform the way we think about government and politics.
- **Gospel Conclusions** – based on these biblical truths, we'll come to 12 conclusions, basically taking all we will see in Scripture, summarizing those truths under the umbrella of the gospel message. So by about midnight tonight, we'll have a firm understanding of God, government and the gospel that will then lead us to...
- **Practical Takeaways** – I have lots of practical exhortations that I hope help us wisely apply God's Word in the time and place in which we live.

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

All Scriptures are quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By David Platt. © David Platt. Website: [Radical.net](http://Radical.net)