

# Your Vocation in Civil Government

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## INTRODUCTION:

1. What are some of the reasons that people need a government?

2. What are some of the controversial things that governments do?

3. In summary, governments exist to keep people \_\_\_\_\_ (Police Dept., Fire Dept., natural disaster relief teams, military, etc.) and to make sure people are treated \_\_\_\_\_ (court system).

4. What is a “vocation”?

Your “vocation” is your station in life that serves as a channel of God’s blessings to the people around you. Everyone has multiple, overlapping vocations. For example, you might be a son and a brother and a student and a newspaper delivery boy all at the same time. In each case, God can use your talents to bless the people around you.

Your vocation in civil government is how you serve as a channel of God’s blessings to your neighbors through your station in life as a citizen, a civic activist, a public service worker, a government official, or even as a student who learns about how government works.

5. To help you live out your vocation faithfully, this lesson will teach you:
  - I. To identify the natural law foundation of God’s blessing of good government.
  - II. To recall examples from the Bible of God-fearing people who have served in government.
  - III. To distinguish between times when you should obey or disobey the government.
  - IV. To consider how you might apply your talents through a vocation in civil government.

**PART I: The Natural Law Foundation of God’s Blessing of Good Government**

1. God has revealed His moral law in two basic ways:
  - A. He has written morality into the hearts or consciences of all people. We call this **natural law**. God’s gift of human reason helps us to recognize it.
  - B. He has also recorded the moral law in the Bible, for example, in the Ten Commandments.

2. Under natural law, all people have natural rights. Governments exist to protect those rights.

3. Which three natural rights are emphasized in the Declaration of Independence?

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are ....”		

4. By which of the Ten Commandments does God protect our life? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the most important kind of liberty that every government should protect? Why?

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6. By which of the Ten Commandments does God protect our property? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Some of America’s founding fathers were Christian. How do you suppose their Christian faith helped them to establish a good form of government for America?

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8. Some of America’s other founding fathers were not Christians. Nevertheless, they still understood the basics of natural law morality. They believed that some sort of god had created the world, given people consciences, and would judge them when they died. How do you suppose these basic natural law ideas helped these non-Christians to join with Christians when establishing America’s government?

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9. Today, some Americans are Christians, and others are not. We certainly would like to see the Gospel spread so that all people would trust in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. But, even when not all Americans are Christians, Christian and non-Christian Americans can still participate together in civil government so long as they share a common political framework. What is the God-given foundation of that framework? Two words: \_\_\_\_\_ .

## PART II: Examples from the Bible of God-Fearing People Who Served in Government

1. \_\_\_\_\_ served as second-in-command to Pharaoh. God blessed him with the insight to prepare the Egyptians for a seven-year famine. (Gen 41)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was God's appointed legislator for the children of Israel. He recorded a system of civil law in the Pentateuch. (Ex 21-23; Dt 15; 16:18-17:20; 19:1-25:19)
3. A Jewish woman named \_\_\_\_\_ became the Queen of Persia. She pleaded with the king to have an evil law repealed, so that her people would not be punished for worshipping God. (Est 5-8)
4. A \_\_\_\_\_'s servant was very ill, but he had faith that Jesus could heal his son merely by speaking. (Mt 8:5-13)

## PART III: Properly Obeying and Disobeying the Government

1. In general, Christians, like all people, should obey their governments.
  - a. God commands our obedience to the government in the Fourth Commandment.
  - b. "Good government" is a blessing that we request of God in the Fourth Petition.
  - c. Christians should honor even a government run by unbelievers. (Ro 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:13-14)
2. When the going gets tough, Christians, like all people, can appeal to their governments for the full exercise of their legal rights.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ asked Pharaoh for the religious liberty to worship the true God in the desert. (Ex 5:1)
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ appealed his case to Caesar. (Ac 25:11)
3. However, when a government insists upon requiring its citizens to violate God's moral law, then the government has directly attacked its God-given foundation. (Recall from Part I, Question 9, the two word name for that foundation: \_\_\_\_\_.) In such cases when people cannot obey the government without sinning against God, then they should disobey the government in order to follow God's moral law.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ refused to bow down to an idol of Nebuchadnezzar even when they were punished by being cast into a fiery furnace. (Dan 3)
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ refused to stop praying to God even when Nebuchadnezzar punished him by casting him into the den of lions. (Dan 6)
  - c. When the Jewish leaders tried to make them stop preaching the gospel, \_\_\_\_\_ and the other apostles told the Sanhedrin, "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)
4. Think of a law that you should obey, even though you (that is, your sinful nature) may not want to obey it. Pray that God will give you the desire to serve Him by properly obeying the government.

5. Think of a law (whether existing now or imagined for the future) that you should *disobey* in order to serve God. Pray that God will give you the courage for properly disobeying the government.

**PART IV: Finding Your Vocation in Civil Government**

1. Every Christian has a vocation in civil government as a *citizen*. Some of us also have vocations as *civic activists*, *public service workers*, *government officials*, or even simply as *students* who learn about how government works.
2. For each category, put a check mark next to *at least one* opportunity that fits the unique set of talents and interests God has given you. (You may check as many as you think apply. If you think of any options not listed, you may write them in the blanks provided.)

<p><b>My Vocation(s) as a Citizen:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Obey all laws except those requiring me to sin</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pay my taxes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Serve on juries when summoned</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vote in elections when eligible</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul> <p><b>My Vocation(s) as a Civic Activist:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Campaign for a political candidate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Educate friends and neighbors about upcoming election issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Research for a political action think tank</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Submit letters to the editor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Call, write, or visit my elected representatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Join the volunteer fire department, Peace Corp, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pray for my government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul> <p><b>My Vocation(s) as a Public Service Worker:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teach in a public school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write unbiased news reports as a journalist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Serve in the military</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Become a social worker or lawyer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Redesign economic policies (e.g., Social Security and Medicare)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Research environmental science (e.g., to improve recycling programs)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Serve in the police, fire, or sanitation department</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Translate foreign languages for an embassy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>My Vocation(s) as a Government Official:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local: School Board, City Council, Mayor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> State: Legislator, Governor, Attorney General, Judge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> National: Congress, President, Supreme Court</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> International: United Nations Ambassador</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul> <p><b>My Vocation(s) as a Student:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enroll at Bethany Lutheran College to study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CM 385: Law and Ethics in the Media</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> HI 430: The Civil Rights Movement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> HI 449: The Supreme Court</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PS 105: American Government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PS 106: World Government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PS 409: The U.S. Constitution</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enroll at Bethany/another college to major in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Broad Field Social Studies</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elementary Education</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> History</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Justice Studies</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Political Science</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sociology</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop a habit of life-long learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Read the newspaper</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Research current events on the internet</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listen to radio news reports</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend public school board and city council meetings</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk about political issues with family and friends and teach your children</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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3. Discuss your choices with one or more people in this class.
4. Share your choices with your parents, your pastor, and your teachers, and ask if they have any additional advice for you.
5. As you finish your schooling to develop the talents God has given you, prayerfully consider whether He is calling you to a vocation in civil government.