

Current

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Equipping the church to reach the world for the glory of God through Christ

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The Christian and Government: Orienting Guidelines

Pastor Bob

We live in the USA. One of the greatest countries in the world. I know that even the previous sentence may cause some consternation because love for our country is a strong emotion. And most of my readers think that the USA IS the greatest country in the world. It just might be true! There is no doubt that God has blessed the United States in unique and varied ways – I'm not sure I'd rather live, from a purely human standpoint, in any other country. The love for country that permeates our psyche creates great tension when so much that is happening governmentally and socially is troubling – from a Christian or common sense standpoint. I'll mention just a few topics: homosexual marriage, abortion, rampant governmental spending. What's a Christian to do when the government makes unwise, un-biblical, foolish and immoral laws and decisions? There are some things we know clearly from Scripture that give us uncontested direction; there are other decisions they make, which the Bible has remained silent on. However, just because the Bible is silent does not mean we must not have our beliefs; it means that we must hold them with less conviction. So here are a few principles to help as you interface the vast labyrinth of laws, decisions and directions that our country's rulers take:

1. **We are required to honor and bless our leaders.** 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 17 instructs us to honor the king. We have no choice, even in the midst of their bad decisions that we must disagree with; when we disagree, we must always protest in a way that does not slander or dishonor our rulers. Yes, we should say, "I disagree and that decision is wrong /unjust/cruel/ etc."; but when we do so, we must be careful so as not to fall into sin ourselves by dishonoring them.
2. **Trust that God is the only true Sovereign.** He still reigns. Nothing catches Him by surprise. All things work together for our good, even sinful decision by rulers. No rulers or legislature has enacted any law that God has not previewed and checked off on, "Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?" (Lamentations 3:37).
3. **Be careful about complaining.** It's bad for you. Jesus' instructions on paying taxes can be summed up with this aphorism, "Pay your taxes and stop whining. You know the true Ruler." We may personally think that higher and more taxes are unwise, but we are hard-pressed to find definitive biblical text to support that thought. We are called to submit in 1 Peter 2:13. No questions, no crabbiness allowed.
4. **Get involved.** We need more Christians, with well-developed world views, involved in law schools, government agencies, and running for political office.
5. **Stay balanced.** The Gospel is our highest priority. We may get involved in the political arena and effect great change only to realize that we have gussied up a rotten tomato. Our country will one day dissolve; only the eternal kingdom of God will last. The USA will not save us, will not take us to heaven when we die, and will not give us the joy that only serving God can give.
6. **Commit to the greatest organization on the planet** – no, it's not the Democratic or Republican party or the City of Orange or the Boy Scouts of America or the USA – it's the church. The church demands our highest earthly organizational commitment. God has uniquely equipped it, with the power of the Holy Spirit, with spiritual gifts and callings, to reach the world with the Gospel. Only the Gospel can save and only the church has been entrusted with this greatest of all treasures.

Herb and Gloria Baker



Gloria and Herb, ministering to international students

Dear praying friends at Taft Avenue Community Church,

Happy New Year. May our Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you in this new year. Thank you for the blessing that you are in our lives. Thank you for having a big part in our ministry of reaching internationals for Jesus.

Please pray for our friend Vincent who is from China and studying here. Yesterday afternoon we started a Bible study with him from the book of Acts, one of our favorite studies of how the Church began. Please pray that Vincent's heart will be open to truly believe in Jesus. He enjoyed having a chili dinner with us - something he has never eaten. He plied us with other questions, and wanted to ask more questions rather than play a table game.

Simon and Jim came back from the Vision Conference in San Diego with a new belief in Jesus. When students reported at the ICF dinner a week ago, they were the men who specifically said that they learned so much about Jesus. Pray as we have them in for lunch next Saturday that we can guide them in their new faith.

Geist wrote about attending a church in Shanghai where people stood up and shouted and praised the Lord in a way that she was not used to. She came to faith at UC Riverside at an ISI meeting there, and we have been following up with her. Pray that she will be able to find a church that can help her in her growth.

Ning wrote and said that she was so grateful to be able to have a Christmas party for two of her colleagues and their babies and husbands. Pray for Ning as she wants her friends to know the Jesus that she has come to love. God has answered her prayer in giving her a new Christian friend, who works with her husband, to guide her in a Bible study. This is the fellowship that she has been praying for.

After a fall on Christmas Eve, Herb has had a CAT scan. We are hoping to get the results soon. Pray that they will be clear. We praise God every day for the good health that we have enjoyed.

Joyfully serving Jesus,

Herb and Gloria Baker

* January 15: His doctor called this morning to let us know that there was no damage in his brain or head from the fall. We praise God for this, and as always thank you for praying.

President Obama, God's Servant

Laura Baxter

We live in tense political times. Our nation's leaders—and voters—are hotly divided. How can the national deficit be reduced? Should there be tighter gun control laws? Should gay marriage be legally protected?

As we ponder these questions, it is appropriate to also ponder Romans 13. Romans 13 calls us to submit to the governing authorities. Paul states, three times, that God has established all governing authorities. He also states, three times, that the authorities are God's servants.

What does it mean that President Obama—to take one example—is God's servant?

It can't mean that his actions are always 100% wise or moral. That is impossible for any human being, much less a politician! We know from Jesus' parables that servants can be either good or evil. See the parables of: Matthew 18 (the unmerciful servant); Matthew 25 (the wicked servant); and Matthew 25 (the talents).

As God's servant, President Obama must answer to God for his actions, just like the servants in the parables of Jesus. God is the ultimate judge of whether our authorities are good or evil, and he will reward them accordingly. We can take comfort in this fact.

As God's servant, President Obama is under God's authority. He cannot do anything more or less than God allows him to do. God "sets up kings and deposes them" (Daniel 2:21). Again, we can take comfort in this fact.

Romans 13 says that God will use his servants to bring good to the righteous and to punish the evildoers. God will accomplish this purpose through President Obama, regardless of President Obama's own personal goals or intentions. Again, we can take comfort in this fact, which is an echo of Romans 8:28: "And we know in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Because President Obama is God's servant, he exceeds his authority when he makes demands that are contrary to God's law. Believers should not obey directives which are immoral. These especially include instructions not to share the gospel. As Peter and the apostles declared in Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than men!"

There is room for disagreement over the exact point where our nation's laws conflict with God's laws (in other words, the point at which we are bound to obey God rather than men). Civil disobedience is serious and requires prayerful consideration. It is also important for us to discuss these things with other Christians, and especially with our Life Groups.

Meanwhile, it is crucial for us to think about, and put into practice, the Bible teachings that are not in dispute. Specifically, we need to remind ourselves that God is in control, that He will work all things for our good, and that He is the ultimate judge. We also need to cultivate an attitude of submission as our baseline, until the authority comes into conflict with God's law.



Missionary Updates & Prayer Requests



Dale and SuZann Beverly, Africa Inland Mission

1. Praise for a wonderful trip to Kenya in November and December, where we did two farming seminars, visited 14 families, and completed our part of the water project.
2. Pray for God's direction as we try to start a new Sunday School class in January or February for Africans living in America.
3. Pray as Dale hopes to restart the breakfast/prayer time with African students at WSU.

Donna and George Warren, EFCA Member Care

The week of January 13-18, our Member Care Team, ENHANCE, met here in Dana Point, traveling from Japan, Hong Kong, Minneapolis, and Illinois.



Ajay Pillai, North India Church Planting

Just last 2 weeks, the Lord has allowed to establish 3 localized Discipleship Centers in rural homes, which we envision eventually becoming small house churches. There are a total of 47 individuals who have committed their lives to Christ in these three locations!

'Temple of Jesus' outreach to Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, has seen much fruit as well. Last Saturday morning 25 people (mainly Hindus) walked forward at the altar call & indicated publicly their faith in Christ and another 23 individuals indicated baptism after discipleship classes.

Pray for protection of our four newly commissioned evangelistic teams ministering in State of Himachel Pradesh. This has many extreme Hindu Political groups constantly harassing & impeding the work of the Lord! At

the moment the teams are prayer walking in strategically identified and located areas.

The Lord has allowed us to plant one new discipleship center in a Tibetan's home last month.

We praise GOD for Taft Avenue Community Church.

Ladies 'Oasis Worship Night

Monday, February 11, 6:30-8:30pm

Do you need a refreshing? After feasting at a tapas bar (on appetizers), come sit at the foot of the cross for a night with the Lord. This is a time to practice some of the spiritual disciplines we talked about in January. Sing songs of praise, along with sharing a favorite scripture, and pray together in small groups. Come minister to the Lord and let Him minister to you. Psalm 96... Sing...Proclaim...Declare...Worship...Rejoice...



Going on in February...

Monday, February 11, 6:30pm-8:30pm: Women's Oasis Worship Night.



Taft Avenue

COMMUNITY CHURCH

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To All the Taft Avenue Volunteers,

Thank you for all the work you do in loving the church family and in reaching our community with the gospel.

Love,

The Taft Avenue Staff