



# The Importance of This Study

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To most believers, government, economics and history are not the first things we think of each morning. We know that government is important because government policy determines how we deal with abortion, marriage and scientific research, but that is about as far as it goes. Most of us have even heard the admonition (especially around holidays), “Don’t talk about religion or politics.” Although the desire to preserve harmony and avoid contention may be commendable, the underlying premise is dangerous. What two topics could be more important?

The discussion of religion impacts our eternal destiny and the discussion of politics determines to a large extent our temporal wellbeing. Unfortunately, many Christians don’t discuss politics, government, economics or history in any sort of relevant or powerful way because they lack the training necessary to contribute clearly to the discussion. Yet a proper understanding could significantly reduce most of the problems that we face in our modern society.

Since before the American Civil War, there has been an effort to expunge Christian thought and biblical principle from the teaching of government, civics, economics and history. Most of us don’t know these concepts because our parents, pastors, and teachers never learned them. This has produced a void in constructing a biblical view of government within the Christian community. However, this does not mean that biblical principles of government are non-existent; they have simply been lost. **This study reintroduces those principles and truths.**

Moreover, biblical principles of government and economics are not just academic concerns. These principles have a substantial impact on our families and our world. Hundreds of millions

of people will suffer and millions will die this year because wrong ideas about government and economics are being taught and believed.

For example, we know that the issues of original sin and human depravity are the root causes of human suffering. But every era of time and every corner of the planet has been cursed by the problems of original sin and human depravity. Why, then, do some periods of time and some nations suffer so much more than others?

The answer to this mystery is found in one word: government. Actually, three governments: Family government, Church government, and Civil government. The well-being of every society in every era of time is a product of how well each of these governments is functioning in that time and place.

When these three God-ordained governments execute their proper duties and refrain from overstepping their proper authority, a society will prosper. Conversely, when these government institutions act beyond their proper authority, society crumbles.

Because civil government has the most far-reaching power and because it has the power of the sword, it has the greatest potential for good or for evil...which is why government is clearly the most significant purveyor of human suffering throughout time. Therefore, if we are to reduce human suffering and meet the spiritual and physical needs of our world, discipleship on the biblically-defined role of government is of paramount importance.

## Overview & Words of Warning

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Some Christians (and especially some Christian leaders) have legitimate concerns about Christians becoming too politically active. They worry about divisiveness in the church—particularly on issues that are not spiritually critical. They worry about believers losing sight of their priorities and being more political than spiritual. There is also bone fide worry about Christians being negatively affected by the corruptness of the world—and politics has more than its share of the world's corruptness. These are valid concerns. For these reasons, it is critical that Christians learn three key things prior to becoming involved in public policy.

**First**, the believer must make his or her walk with the Lord first priority in their life. Scripture reading, prayer time, and worship time must be the first priority. **Second**, we must learn how to apply biblical principles to government. **Third**, we must learn to distinguish between critical and non-critical political issues.

By effectively bringing and applying biblical concepts and principles to politics, we keep the Christian focusing on, and returning to, the word of God. This focus will help to protect the Christian from the corrupting influence of the world—especially of the political world.

By learning some time-tested political basics, we can develop a framework or foundation upon which to build our political beliefs. A person's ideological worldview can be characterized as a tall sky-scraper. The foundation represents the origin of man: either created or evolved. The lower floors represent the person's basic views of right and wrong and the upper floors represent the opinions on specific issues. Like the skyscraper, the upper floors are only as stable as the lower floors upon which they rest. Ultimately the entire structure is only as sound as its foundation.

As each student in this course builds their own political sky-scraper, the most important concepts will form the lower levels of the structure and the less important concepts will form the top. Sincere Christians will certainly disagree with one another on some issues, but it has been our experience that the vast majority of this disagreement occurs on the upper levels of our high-rise. Our focus in this course will primarily be on the foundation and the lower floors of the structure.

We would like to stress our view that the most important issue for any individual is, "What is your relationship with Jesus Christ?" We need to make absolutely sure that no belief or activity gets in the way of this relationship. We believe that as we draw nearer to Jesus, our desire to reach-out and serve others increases. As we will see later in the course, politics and public policy is an important area of service to others. But the relationship with Christ must come first!

Christians should exercise tolerance on many political issues—especially for each other. What do we achieve if we win a debate but alienate our brother?

Last, but not least, the believer needs to be sure that adequate time and attention is being given to the family. Many good hearted Christians set out on the important task of preserving their community, their schools and their government, but lose their kids along the way. The secret to the effective Christian walk lies in "balance". We may never fully achieve it, but we must never lose sight of its importance.

In an effort to wrap-up these opening comments, let us add a few personal opinions. First, for every Christian who "goes off the deep end" and becomes politically active at the expense of God or family, there are multitudes of believers that are just as imbalanced in the opposite direction. Second, we believe that the balance we should seek is individual—not corporate. By this we mean that every believer should be heavily involved in all three areas: God, Family, and Country.

**...Where is your imbalance?**

