



Lesson 3

The Separation of Church and State

Review again the differences between the church and the state. Review how Christians let their lights shine as they interact with the imperfect state.

Introduction

List some ways the church benefits from state-run programs while maintaining separation of church and state.

Read Proverbs 28:2-12.

1. As you read Proverbs 28, pick out traits of a “bad government” and a “good government”?
2. The state operates by means of natural law and human reason. But the difference between good and bad governments generally involves more than a lack of wisdom or common sense among its leaders. When do rulers and governments go rogue? Give examples.
3. Unfortunately, governments acting in the name of religion can be just as corrupt and misguided. They often persecute those who obey the Lord. Give examples.

Jesus taught a separation of church and state

Read Matthew 22:15-22.

4. The inscription on the coin would have said that Caesar was a god. How did the enemies of Jesus plan to trap him with their question?
5. Why was Jesus' answer the perfect answer?
6. What do we owe to God and to those who govern us?
7. The First Amendment reads, in part, "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*" Why do you think the Founding Fathers included these words in the U.S. Constitution?
8. What danger exists when people don't recognize the separation of church and state or confuse the distinction between the two? Can you give examples?
9. How can a two-party political system provide a challenge for the church in regard to keeping church and state separate?

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-7.

10. Paul urges us to pray for those who are ruling over us. He said this even though the Roman government was evil and anti-Christian. What should we ask for in our prayers for the government?
11. How does a stable government aid in the proclamation of the gospel?

Read Deuteronomy 24:1 and Matthew 19:1-9.

12. Moses made a civil law that required men who abandoned their wives to at least give them a certificate of divorce. The Pharisees, because of their hard hearts, took that to mean they could divorce for any reason at all. Jesus went back to God's Word for the truth in regard to marriage. How does civil government differ in regard to how it sees divorce?
13. Give some examples of civil laws that may be deemed necessary in our society but are contrary to Scripture.

The state and the church can work toward common goals

14. In Wisconsin, the state has a voucher system through which children of low-income families can receive reimbursement for private education, including parochial schools. Is that a blurring of church and state? What may be some things to be concerned about? (You could make the same argument for lunch programs, transportation, etc.)
15. Churches enjoy huge tax advantages in our country. They don't pay income tax or, in most cases, property tax. Is the church in danger of being too connected to the state? Why or why not?
16. You are at the local caucus of the party of your choice. The issue of abortion is brought up. How might you argue the case for making abortion illegal?
17. A congresswoman asks to hold a political rally at your church. How would you respond to her?
18. How can we ensure that we honor the separation of church and state while still recognizing the appropriate connections that exist?