

SC 20 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Introduction

1. Do you typically think of your government positively or negatively? Why do you think that is?
2. How would you characterize your discussions about government and politics with other Christians and with non-Christians? (heated, frustrating, fruitful, constructive, etc.?)
3. Why is patient dialogue so important when discussing politics and government? What are some of the dangers of only discussing these topics with sound bites and slogans?
4. How would you respond if a citizen of Iran if he or she asked you the following question: "Is the United States a Christian nation?" Explain your answer.
5. Why is it important to understand the biblical covenants as we think about applying the Bible's teaching to the government we live under?
6. Respond to the following statement: "God gave Israel specific laws and regulations through Moses, so all nations need to follow those same laws today."
7. If the Bible does not answer all of our specific questions about politics, does that mean it is irrelevant to political discussions? Explain your answer.
8. Why is it important that we make a distinction between primary, secondary, and tertiary theological issues within the church? Why is this also important for political issues?
9. Make a list of theological issues that fit under the following categories: (1) primary, (2) secondary, (3) tertiary. Make a similar list for primary and secondary political issues.
10. Explain the following statement: "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity." Does this statement mean that all non-essential issues are unimportant? Explain your answer.
11. Given how divisive politics can be, why don't Christians have the option of avoiding this topic?
12. Why is the distinction between "God's Word" and "our wisdom" so important when we discuss government?
13. What does it say about us if we identify ourselves more closely with a political party than with our brothers and sisters in Christ?
14. How can we cultivate a healthier approach to discussing government and politics with both Christians and non-Christians?
15. How do our conversations within the church about politics affect our witness to a watching world?

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Gospel Foundations

1. Why must our understanding of the gospel begin with a right view of God and what He is like?
2. How does a low view of God lead to an unbiblical view of sin?
3. Respond to the following statement: "We shouldn't talk about sin so much because it will turn people off from the good news of the gospel."
4. What do we mean when we say that Christ is sufficient for our salvation? What has He done to reconcile us to God?
5. How would you answer this question: "What must I do to be saved?"
6. Some people want Jesus to be their Savior, but they don't want Him to be in charge of their life. Why is this an unbiblical response to the gospel?
7. How would you explain what repentance means to a non-Christian with no knowledge of the Bible?
8. The topic of hell can be unsettling for people. Why is it actually loving to include it in our discussion of the gospel?
9. When God saves us, He also transforms us (even if the process is often slow). What kinds of changes should we expect in the life of someone who believes the gospel??
10. If you are not a Christian, what remaining questions or hesitations do you have related to the gospel? If you are a Christian, how does rehearsing the gospel strengthen your faith and hope?

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Biblical Truths

Part 1 (Law, History, Wisdom, Prophets)

1. As the sovereign Creator, God has ultimate authority and governance over all things. Why is this truth critical to our view of human governments?
2. Given government's most basic responsibilities, why is an imperfect government better than no government?
3. God expects earthly rulers to reflect His own just governance. How are citizens benefitted when a government rules with justice?
4. In what ways does a government reflect the God or gods of its people? How can you see this dynamic in the government that you live under?
5. List some differences between the world's standards for a leader and God's standards.
6. In your own words, explain what it means to govern with biblical wisdom.
7. The prophets confronted Israel's sinful leaders. If we never speak against the sins of our favorite political leaders or parties, what does this say about our allegiances?
8. What are some ways we show allegiance to government over allegiance to God?
9. What are some examples of unjust leadership in the Old Testament?
10. What are some ways that love for our own nation can keep us from compassion for all nations? In what ways have you allowed your desire for comfort to keep you from extending mercy to others?

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Biblical Truths Part 2 (Gospels, Acts, Letters)

1. How has Jesus displayed His perfect and just kingship?
2. Why is the world's hatred of the church inevitable?
3. According to this teaching session, how does the danger of our life increase according to the depth of our identification with Jesus?
4. Should we stay or flee amidst persecution? Give some biblical examples of each of these responses to persecution.
5. What are some specific ways Jesus' kingdom is radically different from the kingdoms of this world?
6. Why is understanding the work of the Spirit essential for the church?
7. What does the book of Acts teach us about obedience to God in the face of government opposition? When are Christians *required* to disobey government?
8. How does God use citizens, citizenships, rulers, systems, and structures of government for the spread of the gospel?
9. What does it mean for Christians to have dual citizenship?
10. Why are Christians commanded to pray for all people, including the government?

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Gospel Conclusions

1. What are some examples of ways we are prone to falsely hope in the government?
2. How can governments reflect God's character?
3. What are some ways we see the depravity of man play out in government?
4. How does the reality that Christ's Lordship will one day be recognized by all people change our response to government and to persecution?
5. How is Jesus qualified to be the mediator between God and men? Why is this good news?
6. In what ways do followers of Jesus possess an entirely new political identity?
7. Why is the church the most important "political" community on earth?
8. What are the consequences of Christians valuing political position over people's salvation?
9. What are some ways that Christians honor the government?
10. What is the primary mission God has given the church?

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Practical Takeaways

1. We need to recognize truths that God has stated clearly in His Word, truths that all Christians should agree on regardless of their political positions. List some of those truths.
2. In what ways do many people confuse the respective roles of God and government?
3. Government cannot change the human heart. How should this reality affect our expectations of government policies?
4. How do governments influence the moral fabric of a nation?
5. What are some examples of temptations we might have to rely on our own wisdom rather than God's Word regarding government?
6. What are some issues that you've put in the "primary" category that should not be there? What's the danger of viewing issues as primary that shouldn't be primary?
7. Is the tax rate a "primary" or "secondary" political issue? Explain your answer.
8. Should all sins be criminalized? Why not?
9. What's wrong with the approach that explains all injustices by simply claiming that people "just need to take more personal responsibility"?
10. There is a lot of talk of Christians pursuing justice today. What is a biblical definition of justice, and how is this different from the way many people use the term today?
11. What is the most important thing Christians can do politically? How would you defend your answer?
12. Why is unity in the church so important?
13. What does it mean to say that freedom of religion is ultimately given by God?
14. What are some examples of ways that Christians can be the best citizens possible?
15. How are we to hasten the coming of the true King?