

Worldview ~ Part 4

Law and Politics

by Steve & Carol Ryerson

“Why, of course I think that marriage should be between a man and a woman, but on the other hand I don’t think that we should discriminate.”

“No I’m certainly not in favor of killing little children before they’re born, but I don’t think we should take away a woman’s right to choose either.”

“My daughter? No, I don’t want my daughter on the front lines of combat, but don’t you think that if women are going to have equal rights with men, then they should have equal responsibilities?”

Do you remember that we started our last article with these same quotes? We discussed some vital principles to consider in thinking about the man-centered worldview represented by these statements. For example, we discussed the difference between evolution and creation as it relates to psychology and sociology. The evolutionist does not have a good explanation for human self-consciousness. When that first fish climbed out of the water on its leg-like fins and began struggling to breathe air with its lung-like gills, did it know what it was doing? If not, when and how did the first being know who it was? The evolutionist’s scheme does not answer these questions well.

We talked about real guilt that comes from violating God’s standard as opposed to psychological guilt that comes from violating a standard that society has set. We also talked about how the Christian views suffering far differently from the non-Christian.

What we did not do was to come back to the above quotes and address the issues raised in them in a point-by-point fashion. We will do that here in our discussion of law and politics.

Before we do that, we must state a few basics. The Biblical concept of law comes from the character of God Himself. Actions that are contrary to His character are written into His law as they relate to man. They teach man about God, and they help man to understand why he needs a Savior (Galatians 3:24). Since God is eternal and unchanging, His law is too. His law is so permanent that it will someday be used to judge the world (Acts 17:3, Romans 2:16). God established human government to keep our passions and tendencies in check, so that when we resist the efforts of government to enforce order and righteousness, we are resisting God (Genesis 9:6, Romans 13:1-4).

When man rebels against God’s authority, he lives as though there were no God and no judgement. In that process, man forgets the connection between law and God. So, law is no longer a sacred thing to him. He begins to think in terms of the likelihood of getting caught and what the penalty might be rather than in terms of his responsibility to the Creator of the law. Dr. David Noebel said it this way, “The reason public trust disappears is simple: when law is not considered sacred, neither is it considered binding.”

People who have forgotten God and who are trying to justify themselves will sometimes say, “You can’t legislate morality.” That is an uninformed statement. Any law against theft is a legislation of morality, and it comes from the character of God (Exodus 20:15). What they might mean to say is that law is limited in what it can do to make a person do right. That is true. During the time of the Judges and the Kings, God sent many prophets to His people to show them just how far they had gone in rejecting Him. The messages they brought certainly named the sins that bound the people, but

the focus was on the fact that they were not worshipping the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Along with the Word for that day was a Word for the future. God told His people a day would come that would be different.

Jeremiah 31:33 ~ “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

The Law must be inside a person for it to make a change. Law on sote doesn't break up a stony heart.

Sometimes people who say that we can't “legislate morality” mean that law will not make people behave right in their personal sexual lives. Again, this is true because there has to be a change of heart. Certainly the Old Testament is full of examples of sexual immorality, including the familial and societal chaos that it created. Interestingly enough, adultery is still a chargeable offense in the U.S. military. Soldiers and sailors can be demoted or removed from the service for this crime. Why? Is it so because the military is run by Biblical principles? No. Members of military units must trust each other with their lives. They must do their respective jobs well if the unit's task is to be accomplished. Individual soldiers must be able to concentrate on the task at hand because others' lives depend on it. If one soldier is having an affair with another soldier's wife, or if a male member of the unit is having an affair with a married female member of the unit, the readiness of the unit is impaired. The military understands that adultery undermines healthy order.

Let's now go back to our opening statement and look at it in the light of law and politics. “Why, of course I think that marriage should be between a man and a woman, but on the other hand I don't think we should discriminate.” Look at the last word and ask yourself what it means. In the broad sense, discriminate all the time because we must. When you go into a restaurant, look over the menu, and speak with the waitress, you must discriminate. You must tell her what you want, and by implication, what you don't want. That's discrimination, but not in the way that this statement means.

The person who said this had two major thoughts in mind, and he didn't know how to put them together without a conflict. Discrimination, here, refers to treating someone who is a member of a protected class of people differently in the providing of some product or service because he is a member of that class. If a real estate company refuses to do business with Lutherans or Chinese people, they are committing an illegal act because of their discrimination against that religious or ethnic group. Homosexuals are not a protected class of people. Many of the politically active homosexuals want others to believe that they are, but they are not under U.S. law. We have heard so much about discrimination against people for racial or religious reasons as being bad or illegal that we have a negative connotation with the word discrimination in all circumstances. The fact is that it is not illegal to discriminate against someone because of their homosexuality in most cases. I say “most cases” because some local governments do have anti-discrimination laws that name “sexual preference” as a basis upon which one cannot discriminate in providing a product or service.

Many companies have strict policies that prohibit discriminating against homosexual people in hiring and even prevent public speech against them ~ General Motors, FedEx, and Proctor & Gamble among them. People know this and sometimes assume that federal law requires it, but it does not. So, while discrimination on the basis of sexual behavior is not illegal in most parts of the country, it is becoming commonly accepted for it to be against company policy and therefore a basis on which someone could be fired.

The other major thought the person who made the statement had in mind is the Biblical

requirement that marriage be between one man and one woman. That is a requirement, and it is easily explained.

The person's problem is that he has two types of law ~ two sources of law ~ in mind, and he hasn't prioritized them. The fact is that God's law does discriminate. It discriminates between the righteous and the unrighteous. It discriminates between the guilty and the not-guilty. It discriminates between those who are submitted to God and those who are rebelling against Him. We must not allow the world to make us feel guilty about agreeing with God about what actions are right and what actions are wrong. Those who are guilty must repent, and we do not need to feel guilty about saying that. This is so especially because the same Word that teaches guilt also teaches hope for those who repent.

God's Word is clear about homosexuality being wrong. Romans 1:26-27 among other passages makes it very clear. So, when we have man's law in conflict with God's law, we must choose to follow God's law.

Consider the second statement: "No, I'm certainly not in favor of killing little children before they're born, but I don't think we should take away a woman's right to choose either." Again we have a case of two laws in conflict and a person who isn't sure of what he believes. When he characterizes the pro-abortion stance as "killing little children," he is expressing it in a way that most "pro-choice" people would object to. However, he is expressing a truth in that when a person is developing inside his mother, he is exactly that, a person. Exodus 21:22-23 deals with the case of the death of an unborn child when death is caused by a physical attack (battery). The penalty is the same as it would be for murder i.e., death. Psalm 139 contains a beautiful description of a person's development in the womb.

When the person making the above statement speaks of a woman's right to choose in this context, he is going beyond the bounds that the Word of God places on human will. Yes, we can and in fact must make choices every day. The Scripture gives us many commands, and we must choose to follow those commands. We are told to repent of our sin. We are told to worship God. We are told to love our wives and to submit to our husbands. Those are all actions that come from choices we make. God will not do those things for us.

But, human choice is not so valued in God's Kingdom that it overrides God's law. We cannot choose to commit adultery, to murder, to worship false gods, or to dishonor our parents without severe personal and societal consequences. Just ask a child whose parents have divorced whether he thinks divorce is OK.

Anyone's right to choose, in God's sight, is limited to choosing to obey God. A woman cannot legitimately choose to end the life of her child. She can choose to do that legally in our system of law, but that fact points out the extent to which we have set up our own system in defiance of God's will.

Think back to the third statement: "My daughter? No, I don't want my daughter on the front lines of combat, but don't you think that if women are going to have equal rights with men, then they should have equal responsibilities?" Again, we have man's system at odds with God's plan, and we have someone who is confused about what is right. Jesus summarized it well. He said in Luke 16:13 that a man cannot serve two masters. The context there is a discussion about money, but the principle is broader than that. We complicate our lives immeasurably when we try to serve ourselves and serve God at the same time. The person who made the above statement is trying to do that. We have to make some decisions about who we are going to serve. In the context of this article, that implies a question: "Which system of law are we going to follow?"

Proverbs 13:15 ~ Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

Good understanding indicates that we walk in this life with clear direction. In law and politics, we need a solid foundation and wisdom to go the right way. When we are confused about which law we will follow, we will not have good understanding about how to live. Our lives will be harder.

God created the distinction between male and female (Genesis 1:27). Before God, there is no difference regarding the value of one gender over the other (Galatians 3:28). Men are physically stronger than women in their ability to apply force to objects (but not in their expected life spans). That greater strength lends itself to fighting when fighting is called for. Men are commanded to be aware and respectful of the differences between themselves and their wives whereas women are commanded to submit to the legitimately exercised authority of their husbands (I Peter 3:6-7; Ephesians 5:25-33). These basic statements speak of a cooperative relationship between men and women, not a competitive one. They imply that men and women have different roles in society, not that one gender is better than the other. The responsibilities that come with rights do not have to be functionally identical. As a general rule, men are the adventurous risk-takers. They are the protectors who challenge intruders. Women are the nurturers of relationships and the protectors of stable homelife. They tenderly care for the young and desire that their husbands provide a protective umbrella for them. Of course, there are some individual exceptions to this when situations demand it, but these are the norms that we see in Scripture and in our daily lives. We see no suggestion in Scripture that one role is more important than the other.

If men and women will seek God for His will in their lives, He will provide important work and clear direction for them without following a predetermined list of do's and don'ts that come from man's attempt at fairness (our legal system as it goes beyond God's law) rather than God's statement of justice (His Word). Women's responsibilities can be different from men's without being less valuable.

The Christian sees government as a creation of God for the preservation of justice in the affairs of men (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-7). In Scripture, government is not shown as the agency by which children are reared, businesses are supervised, or places of worship are run. Those are the roles of individuals, families, or the Church. Government exists to insure that people's sinful tendencies do not interfere with others' ability to live their lives in a godly way. So, government becomes related to those other segments of society when law enforcement officials suspect that justice is not being served and that laws are being violated. But, government should not be taking the role of the other institutions.

Rousas Rushdoony made an important point when he asserted that whether a man "...can vote or not is not nearly as important as the question of justice: does the law leave him secure in his governmental spheres, as an individual, a family, church, school, or business?" (Thinking Like a Christian, page 126) In the Bible, individuals are responsible to God for their actions. They have the task of governing themselves. If they do not do that, government must step in and make sure that others are not harmed. The lower the level of character that people demonstrate, the more external government we must have. A simple example: If no one stopped for traffic lights, we would need many more policemen than we do now. So, more of society's resources would be spent paying policemen, we would be less free, and less money would be available for us to spend according to our choices. William Penn said it this way, "If we are not governed by God, then we will be ruled by tyrants." (Thinking Like a Christian, page 128).

We should be teaching our children to do right because they have a responsibility before God to do right. When we do that, we will produce citizens who will love God, their neighbors, and eventually their own families. As our children live the Biblical lifestyle, they will not need government officials standing over them to tell them to do right. These efforts begin in your homes when your children are very young. As you insist that they obey you, you are in fact the agent of God

in their lives. You are not just “keeping them quiet” for the sake of your sanity. You are law and government to them.

The Humanist and the Communist see government as an instrument of man’s salvation. They see salvation as self-fulfillment and the completely equitable distribution of resources, respectively. The Christian sees government as an agent to administer God’s justice. Most of government’s function, in the Biblical view, should be focused on those who do not honor God because those who honor God also honor government in its proper role. Therefore, they need very little attention from government. For the Christian, success and salvation will come from faithfulness to God, not from fitting in with the crowd.