



CHRISTIANS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

T. M. Moore

The Fellowship of Ailbe

A ReVision Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Christians in Public Service
A *ReVision* Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe
Copyright, 2015 T. M. Moore

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Contents

Welcome to <i>ViewPoint</i>	4
1 Not Necessarily Evil	5
2 No Compromise	7
3 Start Where You Can	9
4 Excellence in All Things	11
5 Ready with a Word of Truth	13
6 Little by Little	15
7 Beachheads for Blessing	17

Christians in Public Service

Welcome to *ViewPoint*

Welcome to *Christians in Public Service*, an introduction to Biblical teaching about the calling to serve God in the public sector. *Christians in Public Service* is one of our *ViewPoint* series of studies in Biblical worldview.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

Take one lesson at a time, reading the Scriptures and narrative aloud, and pausing to reflect on and discuss the questions provided. Don't be in a hurry. Be willing to take more than one session on a lesson if it will allow you to delve more deeply into the subject matter.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to "have all the answers." Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We are happy to receive your suggestions for future topics and studies. Contact us at our webpage. And if you're not receiving *ViewPoint* first thing every day, then be sure to register on the website, www.ailbe.org.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Not Necessarily Evil

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 13.1

What's that smell?

In the minds of increasing numbers of Americans, all things political and governmental are beginning to smell rather foul.

When was the last time you participated in a conversation or discussion extolling the many virtues and positive accomplishments of people in public office, or of the government as a whole? The distance between Americans and those who govern them is growing greater day by day, and for many of the electorate, I fear, this is a matter of “good riddance.”

Which, if it is true, would be a colossal mistake.

Governments, of course, can be evil. They can do horrible, terrible things, enact grotesque and abominable policies, and exercise oppression and the aggrandizement of power better than any institution on earth. But why does this happen? Is it because government is inherently evil? Is there no escaping the putridity and odium which are so often attached to politics and government?

Well, not if the Scriptures are to be believed. In the Biblical worldview government is a far cry from a necessary evil; indeed, Paul insists that government is the servant of God for good (Rom. 13.4).

A servant for good

God created the world and all things in it “good.” His design was that beauty, goodness, charity, abundance, prosperity, and wholesomeness should abound to every creature, because such things are consistent with His eternal character and will.

But the advent of sin at the fall of humankind injected a mean spirit of self-centeredness into the race of men. Unless this is checked, there could be nothing like a just social order, for every man would seek what was right in his own eyes, and the weak and vulnerable would always be prey to the wily and strong.

Governments were instituted by God to aid human beings in realizing as much of God’s *shalom* as is possible in a fallen world. Paul taught Timothy to lead men to pray for rulers and governors, so that they might be able to rule in just this way, and so that the *shalom* of God might be the common possession of all (1 Tim. 2.1-8).

Governments have the power to suppress whatever is wicked, encourage all that is good, promote liberty, dignity, industry, creativity, and prosperity. But for this to be the case, governments must conform their practices to the ends and will of God. There has never been a perfect civil government in all the annals of human history, even in those places and times when the Gospel prevailed in a nation or state. Men are always prone to sin and not always keen to restrain their selfish desires.

When the power to rule falls into the hands of sinful people, God’s purpose for government can become corrupted and government can be used in a manner wholly contrary to His good and perfect will.

The call to public service

This is why, as *The Westminster Confession of Faith* explains, “It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto” (XXIII.II). The *Confession* continues by saying that those who enter into the arena of public service “ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth”. We can imagine that civil governments, manned by men and women devoted to such demeanor and focused on achieving God’s *shalom* for the people they serve, might be altogether different, in many ways, from what is, sadly, becoming familiar in our own nation.

Christians can and must accept a calling from God to serve in the public realm. Two excellent Biblical examples – Joseph and Daniel – can help us to understand just how believers in public service might expect to contribute to bringing the *shalom* of God to those they are called to serve.

For reflection or discussion

1. How many different opportunities for serving in the public sector can you identify?
2. As you think about the public sector and the role of government, what are some of the primary obstacles to government serving as God’s agent for good?
3. Meditate on 1 Timothy 2.1-8. What is God’s *shalom*? What are some ways you might expect to see that in your community?
4. Off the top of your head, what are some things from Joseph and Daniel that you think might inform a Biblical approach to public service?
5. What are your goals for this study? What do you hope to learn?

Next steps: Meditate on 1 Timothy 2.1-8. Who are the civil authorities for whom you should be praying? Put a list together, and share it with some Christian friends, encouraging them to join you in this most fundamental aspect of your duty in public service.

Prayer:

2 No Compromise

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Daniel 1.8

Begin here

Daniel and Joseph provide two excellent examples for Christians considering a calling from the Lord to public service.

These two men, separated by nearly 2,000 years, show us how one who is committed to serving the Lord can fulfill that service in the public arena, with powerful and beneficial results. We want to ferret out a few principles for Christians thinking about – or already engaged in – public service, so we'll be looking at Joseph and Daniel as exemplars for a brief overview of the Biblical teaching about public service.

We begin with the most important principle of all: Christians who wish to enter the public arena and serve in the halls of civil government, must make up their minds that all their service, at all times, will be first of all unto the Lord. As Paul put it, "Whatever you do, work heartily, for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward" (Colossians 3.23, 24).

Politics and compromise

Politics and government is the vocational arena in which compromise is celebrated as a great virtue. Indeed, politicians spend a good deal of time vilifying one another because, as they claim, their opponents are not willing to compromise for the sake of the public weal.

While it is true that some kinds of compromise are allowable and useful, compromise on matters of ultimate moral and spiritual moment must never be tolerated on the part of those who are first of all citizens in the Kingdom of God.

Serving on God's terms

We see this in Joseph, while he served as a house-slave in the home of Potiphar.

Joseph was a good worker. Granted, he was not given the option of entering public service, at least, not at this stage in his life. But he demonstrated no resentment, did his work excellently and without grumbling, and so gained the trust of Potiphar, who often left him alone at his home.

Potiphar's wife did not fail to see the trust Joseph had earned with her husband, so she thought it might be possible to seduce him and the two of them get away with it. And that probably would have been so. But Joseph would have none of it, avowing that his first allegiance was to God. Men could do with and to him what they will, but Joseph set his heart to obey God, and he was not about to compromise for any reason (Gen. 39.1-10).

The same was true with Daniel.

Impressed into service in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel refused to go beyond the teaching of God's Word, even in so simple a matter as to the diet he should follow during his time of public service. He knew that King Solomon warned against the enticements of royal cuisine (Prov. 23.1, 2). Doubtless, too, the instructions of Ezekiel, Daniel's contemporary, concerning what the people of God were to eat while in Babylon, were fresh in his mind (cf. Ezek 4.9-12).

Daniel was willing to serve, but only on God's terms, and not those of a pagan king.

Accepting a call from the Lord to serve in civil government, at any level, in any capacity, is a valid way for believers to fulfill their service to the Lord. But they must realize, going in, that all kinds of compromises may be expected of them. It is simply how the business of politics is conducted. Some of these compromises will be allowable because they do not relate to matters of principle or morality. Very often, in seeking to get things done, trade-offs, promises of mutual support, postponing best policies for the best we can get right now will be the way to proceed.

But no believer should ever do anything in the way of compromise he would not feel good about before the face of God and in the hearing of his or her constituents.

And no Christian, under any circumstances or for any reason, should compromise truth or morals for political gain. Make up your mind, going into public service, that, like Daniel and Joseph, your policy, when it comes to such matters, will always be, “no compromise.”

For reflection or discussion

1. Do you agree that a Christian thinking about public service should make his or her beliefs known up front? Why or why not?
2. What might be some examples of “legitimate” compromises a Christian serving in the public sector could make?
3. What would be some examples of compromise a Christian will have to decline?
4. Meditate on Romans 7.12. Should the Law of God inform a Christian’s involvement in the public sector? Why or why not?
5. What do you think should be the primary benchmarks or “fall-back” lines for Christians as they think about compromise in public service?

Next steps: What are some areas where people in public service might be tempted to compromise beyond what God approve? Pray for the people on your list, that God would protect them from such compromises. Compile a list of email addresses for your public servants. Write to them to let them know you pray for them regularly.

Prayer:

3 Start Where You Can

Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had had brought him down there. Genesis 39.1

A stage with many tiers

Our tendency, when we think about public service, is to bring to mind those most visible public servants, our elected officials, and especially those who serve at a national level. Presidents, Senators, Congresspersons – these are perhaps what most of us think of when the idea of public service comes to mind.

This is only to be expected, since these are the people the national media tend to thrust before our eyes most of the time.

But the public service arena is a stage with many tiers. It includes elected officials at various levels – local, county, state, and national – as well as those who serve them and those who help to put them in office.

While every opportunity for public service can be a calling from the Lord, not all such callings are financially rewarding. Serving in a political campaign, for example, is typically the work of dedicated volunteers. Most of us who sense a call to public service are not likely to end up on the *visible* tiers of the public service arena. Yet even those who do will likely have to work their way up to such lofty heights, beginning where they can and serving as they are able while they look for opportunities for advancement.

Effective at all levels

The lesson of both Joseph and Daniel is that effective public service can be rendered at all levels, and if we begin where we can, and are faithful, God can open further doors for broader service.

Joseph began his work as a public servant in the Egyptian empire in a rather inauspicious manner. Sold by his brothers into slavery, he was taken to Egypt and sold to an official of Pharaoh's court. Potiphar made Joseph his personal house servant, attending to whatever domestic duties were appointed to him in making Potiphar's life a little easier and more orderly.

His second position as a public servant in Egypt was a step down even from that, as the situation with Potiphar's wife landed him unjustly in prison. But even there, Joseph made the most of his opportunities for serving the Lord.

It's not entirely clear what Daniel and his three friends were impressed to do in the service of King Nebuchadnezzar. The phrase, "competent to stand in the king's palace" (Dan. 1.4), may suggest some merely token presence – a way of mollifying the captive Israelites. It was often the practice of kings to bring representatives of subject peoples into their court simply to have a presence there, in an effort to assimilate or at least placate those they had conquered. Alexander the Great was perhaps the best known practitioner of this tactic.

Or perhaps Daniel and his friends were to be available for some "gopher" duty on behalf of the king or his court – whatever they may require at any moment – or as liaisons with the Hebrew captives.

That Daniel achieved more than this was the result of his faithfulness at this "entry level" position.

Get involved where you can

Christians in Public Service

Believers may seek a calling from the Lord at any level of public service, as volunteers or paid professionals, for the short-term or as a career. Those who feel inclined to such a calling should begin where they can, by contacting local political officials or looking for opportunities either for employment or to volunteer. Now that campaigning has become a year-round sport for public officials, there will always be opportunities for believers to get on board in the public service arena with a party or official, or in a post or position, in line with their particular interests and concerns.

Know your convictions, and don't fear to make them known.

Seek a clear vision from the Lord as to how you might be able to make a contribution to helping government fulfill its divinely-appointed mandate.

Resolve not to compromise your convictions and take up whatever opportunity is presented as though it were the most important thing you might do at the moment to serve the public weal.

For that is surely what it will be.

For reflection or discussion

1. Choose a politician you like. Using Wikipedia and other sources, see what you can find out about how he or she became involved in public service. In how many different "tiers" of service has this person been involved?
2. Contact a local representative of one of the major political parties. See what you can find out about available opportunities for service and what they require.
3. Do you agree that Christians should be seeking a calling from the Lord, even in the lowest tiers of the public sector? Why or why not? What might you do to encourage more Christian involvement at these levels?
4. In what sense are "we the people" always involved in the public sector? What is required of us as Christians there?
5. How would you counsel a young person who asked you for advice about whether he or she should try to get involved in a political campaign?

Next steps: Where might a Christian in your community begin to get involved in public service? See what you can find out, then share your findings with some Christian friends. Pray together about whether God might want you to become involved in public service.

Prayer:

4 Excellence in All Things

And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. Daniel 1.20

Joseph and excellence

Christians who enter the arena of public service must determine that, whatever they are called upon to do, they will do it with all the excellence they can achieve.

We see this in Joseph, who was faithful, diligent, and reliable as a servant in Potiphar's house, so that the Egyptian official felt no qualms about leaving him alone with his wife, even though Joseph was young and handsome.

Joseph continued to demonstrate excellence as he served in the prison. We read of him that "Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed" (Gen. 39.22, 23).

That same degree of excellence vaulted him into Pharaoh's chariot, bearing full authority to lead and manage the nation through a period of desperate drought and famine.

Daniel and excellence

We see the same in Daniel and his three companions.

Given a period of preparation for service in Nebuchadnezzar's court, they made the most of it. When examined at the end of the period, they were already heads and shoulders above all the other court servants in the task for which they had been prepared.

Daniel demonstrated a similar devotion to excellence throughout his career in the courts of Babylon and Persia. This put him on a course of continual advancement and growing influence. We read that "Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom" (Dan. 6.3).

Opportunities for glory

When we are serving the Lord, whatever we are doing, even the most mundane and ordinary task presents an opportunity to display something of the goodness, wisdom, grace, truth, kindness, compassion, justice, and mercy of the Lord. Christians are called to glorify God in all our everyday activities (1 Cor. 10.31); presumably, this would mean that any routine task we might undertake in serving the public good, whether as volunteers or in paid positions, can be an arena for demonstrating the excellence of God.

How can we do this? What can we learn from Joseph and Daniel about such excellence, and how we may show it?

First, we must be careful always to seek the will and favor of the Lord, as both Joseph and Daniel did.

It's important to be up front about our faith and our convictions, so that those who would employ or engage us in public service know from the beginning that we are devoted to doing good, as Jesus did, and that we should not be expected to do anything other than what comports with the character and purposes of God.

And we must seek the Lord daily for wisdom, strength, and joy in serving Him in all our duties.

Then we must take up every task with relish, preparing diligently, learning all we can, establishing good working relationships with the people around us, presenting ourselves as their servants and colleagues, and doing everything without grumbling or complaining.

Let Christians who enter into public service understand their duties thoroughly and always go the extra mile in fulfilling them. Let our conversation be always edifying and gracious, our demeanor always above reproach, and our efficiency and effectiveness of the highest order in everything we do. Such excellence in all things will not go unnoticed.

The believer who enters into public service establishes a beachhead for the Kingdom of God in whatever capacity he or she becomes engaged. From our presence on that beachhead – in our cubicle, at our phone bank, as we fulfill whatever may be our daily tasks – we seek to radiate the righteousness, peace, and joy of the presence of God’s Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18), so that we may honor the Lord with our labors and bring His presence and blessings into our work on behalf of the common weal.

For reflection or discussion

1. Define “excellence.” Why should Christians always seek excellence, whatever their field of endeavor?
2. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 10.31. What are some examples of “everyday” tasks that people in public service have to perform? Do you agree that these can be means of bringing glory to God?
3. From 1 Corinthians 10.31-11.1, compile a list of the things Paul always tried to do which were part of “glorifying God.” In what ways do these relate to your own calling in life?
4. Suggest some ways that a Christian might improve excellence in all things. How might Christians help one another in this? Why does it matter?
5. Can a lack of excellence hinder our spoken witness for Christ? Explain.

Next steps: Using your definition of excellence (above), can you identify any public servants who seem to rise to this standard? Pray for the people on your list, that they might serve with excellence. Then write them and tell them you have prayed for them thus.

Prayer:

5 Ready with a Word of Truth

Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.” Daniel 2.27, 28

Our primary citizenship

The Christian who takes up a calling in public service must never lose sight of the fact that he or she is, first of all, a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is *always* the first order of business every day, for every follower of Jesus Christ (Matt. 6.33). This does not mean that we all must be preachers, or that every conversation must somehow be turned into an opportunity for bearing witness to Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded us first to “be” His witnesses (Acts 1.8), which we will do if we pursue excellence without complaining or compromise in everything we are tasked to do in whatever our role or position might be.

Moreover, if we work hard to make our conversations with others edifying, gracious, and full of civility and respect, we will soon enough find that opportunities for talking about the Lord Who has called us to this way of life will begin to present (1 Pet. 3.15).

Making the most of the opportunities

We want to be ready with a word of truth whenever a door of opportunity begins to crack open. Such opportunities may present to us in one of two ways, either with respect to our work, or as a response to our lifestyle and demeanor.

People will notice excellence in the workplace. Most will appreciate a co-worker who is eager, diligent, efficient, uncomplaining, and willing to do more than what is expected of him.

At the same time, people will notice as we treat them with respect and civility. By learning and using people’s names, keeping our conversation and demeanor above reproach, showing ourselves to be helpful, encouraging, and affirming toward others, we can expect to raise the curiosity on the part of some of our colleagues as to what it is that makes us different.

Whenever such opportunities arise, we must be ready with a word of truth.

A word of truth: Joseph and Daniel

Again, such a word of truth may be of one of two kinds: either a suggestion directly related to our work, or a witness concerning the hope that is within us. We see each of these in Joseph and Daniel.

Joseph’s first opportunity to speak a word of witness arose when he was invited to participate in sinful behavior. To lie with Potiphar’s wife would be to sin against God, and Joseph made it clear, when the invitation to sin was proffered – over and over again – that he would not compromise his convictions.

Daniel’s first word of witness came during a moment of crisis. A frustrated and angry king had determined to do away with all his counselors, including Daniel, since they seemed unable to give him sound advice.

But Daniel stepped forward, as an act of faith, to offer a solution, even though he had no idea what that solution might be. Only as he sought the Lord in prayer did the Lord’s word for him become clear. Then he was able to share confidently with King Nebuchadnezzar what the Lord had made known to him.

Two observations

Now let's note two things about these first opportunities to bear witness.

First, neither Joseph nor Daniel was actively seeking such opportunities. They were not planting tracts on the desks of their co-laborers. They did not display a copy of Scripture in some conspicuous place, or decorate their chariots with "Yahweh is My Way!" bumper stickers. "Praise the Lord!" was not the punctuation mark at the end of their every sentence. And they did not feel the need to preach to or pass judgment on those with whom they were called to work.

They merely lived and worked with excellence in all they did. The Lord was able to take it from there.

Note also that their introducing a word of truth into the situation was specifically related to the situation itself. They intended to show the relevance of their faith to the moment or need at hand, the common concern of everyone involved.

And when it comes to injecting a word of truth into the public square, this is especially sound wisdom.

For reflection or discussion

1. What do we mean by saying that our witness for the Lord might relate either to contemporary issues or personal situations? Can you give some examples?
2. Re-read the last section in this essay. Do you agree with T. M.'s observations here? How do these words counsel you concerning your own witness for the Lord?
3. Do you know anyone serving in the public sector, at any level? Ask that person whether or not opportunities for speaking a ready word of truth ever arise. Has that person risen to the challenge? Why or why not?
4. What can keep Christians, in any area of endeavor, from being ready with a word of truth to speak when a door of opportunity opens? How can we better prepare for these opportunities?
5. Meditate on 1 Peter 3.15 and Colossians 4.6. Comment on the relevance of these two texts to the message of this lesson:

Next steps: Do you know any Christians who are active in public service? Contact each of them, and let them know you're going through this study. Ask if they would like you send them a copy.

Prayer:

6 Little by Little

“To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message?...For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.” Isaiah 28.9, 10

Wielding the Word

I need to say a few more words about Joseph and Daniel and their example of wielding the Word of truth in the public square.

We have already seen that these men led with their lives. They made their convictions known early on and they lived and worked in a manner consistent with their professions of faith. They didn't push their beliefs on others; however, when the opportunity arose to connect their faith with a particular situation or need, they did not hold back. Again, they spoke the Word of God to the *immediate situation* and were content to let their witness extend no further, at least, not at that moment.

However, in each of these men we see a determined effort to bring more of God's truth to bear on their work as public servants, and to give more expansive and consistent witness to the Lord and His purposes.

Each of them did this gradually, here a little, there a little, each time making sure that the integrity of their lives and the excellence of their work provided a solid backdrop for their witness.

The work of the Lord in public service?

Further, each man was able not simply to testify about his faith, but to implicate his contemporaries in the work of the Lord.

We see this, for example, in Joseph's interpreting the dreams of his fellow prisoners, and also in his hearing and interpreting Pharaoh's dream and telling him that God had shown him, Pharaoh, what He, God, was planning to do with the nation of Egypt (Gen. 41.25ff.).

The same is true of Daniel. In chapter 2 he explained to Nebuchadnezzar that God had revealed to *him*, the King of Babylon, what He, God, was planning to do in the latter days.

In a sense Daniel made Nebuchadnezzar a spokesman for the Lord by revealing and interpreting his dream. Daniel's friends further involved the king with the Lord in chapter 3 when, by their bold and uncompromised witness, they led Nebuchadnezzar to become an advocate of the Lord, and not just a mouthpiece for him.

In chapter 4 Daniel's confrontation with Nebuchadnezzar had the effect, over a seven-year period, of turning the prideful king into a fervent believer in the Lord, who published the praises of God throughout his entire empire.

Patience and persistence

All this bearing witness to the Lord, both on the part of Joseph and Daniel, took many years, was consistently grounded in and attached to immediate public and personal concerns, and was accomplished little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept. It never became the focal point of their work as public servants; rather, their opportunities to bear witness to the truth arose naturally in the context of their daily faithfulness and diligence.

Christians serving in the public arena should prepare for a lifetime of bearing witness to the truth of the Lord. They must be far-seeing and patient; ready to speak a relevant and appropriate word, but neither preachy nor

judgmental in their witness; and always careful to maintain integrity and excellence as the context from which they essay to speak on behalf of the Lord.

They should become informed, as much as possible, concerning how the Word of God speaks into matters of public policy, paying special attention to ways the Scriptures might shed light on matters of pressing concern.

They should consult with other believers – friends, pastors, writers, and thinkers – to help them understand their work as public servants from the perspective of a Christian worldview.

And they must not be reluctant, in casual conversations with co-laborers or supervisors, to comment on the relevance of Biblical teaching to matters of moment.

The key is to be believable, relevant, gracious, and patient, and to try to make the most of every opportunity for living and speaking a Word of truth into matters of public policy. As Mordecai said to Esther, when it comes to speaking truth to the public square, believers serving there must be persuaded that God has put them there for just such opportunities.

For reflection or discussion

1. Being a witness for Christ is a process and not an event. Explain the difference:
2. Meditate on Acts 1.8 and Matthew 28.18-20. Comment on “be” and “as you are going” with respect to your witness for Christ:
3. Suggest some ways that believers and their churches might support Christians serving in the public sector in their ongoing witness for the Lord:
4. How confident are you in your ability to speak a ready word of truth and sustain an ongoing conversation about spiritual matters and the Gospel with the people in your workplace? How might you improve in this area?
5. How should a Christian respond to someone who says, in response to a word of witness, “This is not the time or place to bring up such a matter”?

Next steps: Every Christian participates in public service in some capacity. Prayer, as we’ve seen; communicating with public officials; participating in the political process; and voting are just a few ways that can involve every one of Christ’s followers as His witnesses. In which of these areas of public service are you planning to become more involved? Talk with a pastor or church leader concerning how you might better prepare for this work.

Prayer:

7 Beachheads for Blessing

Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court. Daniel 2.49

Seeking God's peace

It is important that Christians who take up a calling in any of the arenas of public service keep in mind at all times that God's purpose for civil government is that it might do good in bringing His *shalom* to the governed.

Governments do not exist as a means for personal advancement. Government serves the needs of the governed, working to ensure a just, peaceable, free, and fruitful society, where opportunities for advancing personal wellbeing are available to all.

Since God is good, and His Law is good, and since the Good News of Jesus is good, Christians serving in the public sector will want to keep everything they do within the framework of these parameters.

By thus seeking the Kingdom of God through the arenas of public service, believers may expect to contribute to the benefit of society and its members.

Paul wrote that the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. He continued, "Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men" (Rom. 14.17, 18). The more consistent believers are in seeking the Kingdom of God through the opportunities presented to them in the public sector, the greater will be the impact for good to which they can contribute.

A blessing for our neighbors

In that respect, Christians who work in public service represent a beachhead for blessing to all their neighbors – both their colleagues and co-laborers as well as those served by their labors.

Civil government is a good and legitimate institution, ordained by God for the purpose of channeling His blessings to all people, believers and nonbelievers alike. When Christians are involved in public service in the ways we have been considering in this series, they carve the channels and lay the conduits for the goodness of God to flow through their work to the people they serve. Whether their labors be large or small, every contribution of good work establishes a beachhead from which the blessings of God's Kingdom can break out to others.

Enlisting our friends

But, like Marines hunkered down on the beach of an enemy-held island, Christians serving in the public sector could use some reinforcements.

Both Daniel and Joseph understood the importance of making a place for like-minded others to join them in their service to God and country. Joseph had his whole family transplanted into the land of Goshen. The Israelites became a source of great productivity and wealth to an ungrateful nation and its tyrannical rulers.

Daniel made it possible for his three friends to assume places of significant service in the Babylonian empire. Their presence made his own work more effective and enhanced his witness for the Lord before the Babylonian king. I

In each of these cases, Joseph and Daniel were able to bring other like-minded believers to join them because of the integrity of their lives, the excellence of their work, and the prudence and graciousness of their witness to the Lord.

We should expect it to be the same for us. Christians serving in the public sector should keep alert to opportunities to connect with other believers in public service, that they might pray for and encourage one another, study issues and policies together, and discuss the ways Scripture and the Biblical worldview might be brought to bear on matters of political or social moment.

At the same time, they may assist and reinforce one another in their witness for the Lord. They might also help to recruit other qualified and called believers into vacancies as these appear in their area of endeavor.

Christians are beachheads for the Kingdom of God wherever they serve, and this is as true in the arena of public service as it is anywhere else. What God requires of all of us – like Joseph and Daniel – is faithfulness in serving Him.

For reflection or discussion

1. What do we mean by the idea, “beachheads for blessing”?
2. Meditate on Matthew 6.33 and Romans 14.17-19. What is the Kingdom of God? How do Christians seek that Kingdom?
3. Meditate on Matthew 6.10 and Daniel 2.44, 45. How would you be able to tell if the Kingdom of God was beginning to have a greater presence in your workplace? Do you have anything to contribute to this?
4. What are the main lessons you’ve gained from this study?
5. How do you hope your own life will improve as a result of these studies? Where do you hope to see some changes?

Next steps: Make some copies of this study for several of your friends. See if they would be willing to join you in working through it together. Share a copy with your pastor and several church leaders.

Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship to help us extend our ministry and resources to others. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.