

SESSION 4: STUDENT

REPENT WHEN YOU DON'T GET INVOLVED . . . AND WHEN YOU DO

OPENING

Before You, Lord, we bow,
Our God who reigns above
And rules the world below,
Boundless in pow'r and love.
Our thanks we bring
In joy and praise,
Our hearts we raise
To You, our King.

—“Before You, Lord, We Bow” (*LSB* 966:1)

INTRODUCTION

Christians “have a positive contribution to make to political life, but through aloofness and scorn of involvement their potential for improvement goes unrealized. They cannot make politics Christian, but they can serve God by serving their fellow men in efforts to bring order where there is chaos, justice where there is injustice, meaning where there is pettiness and poverty of purpose, comfort where there is sorrow, and direction where there is . . . aimlessness.”¹

What a pep talk! *Let's do it*, you might think. Let's get involved. Then we will have nothing to be sorry for.

Think again.

Those who get involved in the rough and tumble of political affairs will come away with their share of bumps and bruises, maybe more. Disappointments lie in store.

There will be sin. And not just the sins of others, either. Yours too.

So, repent—but not only when you aren't involved; repent also when you are.

¹ Paul G. Elbrecht, *The Christian Encounters Politics and Government* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 59.

QUESTIONS

Q1. Before getting too far in discussing *your* involvement in government, let's not forget *God's* involvement. He remains Lord of all, including governing officials. "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; He [that is, the LORD] turns it wherever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). See Proverbs 28:16a; 29:2; Isaiah 3:1–4; Hosea 13:11. What do these passages indicate? Then see 1 Timothy 2:1–7. What does this passage direct regarding government, and why?

Q2. Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession states: "Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God. They teach that it is right for Christians to hold political office, to serve as judges, to judge matters by imperial laws and other existing laws, to impose just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to take oaths when required by magistrates, for a man to marry a wife or for a woman to be given in marriage" (AC XVI 1). Even in sixteenth-century German lands, at a time and in a place that had no elections like our country holds today, people still had an array of ways to be involved in government or in activities that government led or regulated. An even wider variety stands open to Christians who are American citizens today.

So the question arises, *Why don't we Christians do more to get involved?* Read Matthew 5:13–16 and Romans 12:1–2. Then, consider these words: "The Christian cannot afford to fracture his spiritual life. Christianity is not only a pious attitude a person puts on only on a Sunday morning like a Sunday suit. It is a life. It is significant that the early Christians were known as people of 'the way.' For Christianity is a way of life."² So, why don't we Christians do more to get involved?

Q3. *How* might you get involved? And what kinds of things might *you* get involved in? Think of issues on which you see potential for yourself as a Christian to make a contribution, and consider ways (besides voting) in which you could contribute.

² Elbrecht, 70.

Q4. Elections sometimes involve fairly straightforward issues or proposals such as ballot initiatives or state constitutional amendments. More often, though, you vote to support—or not support—someone’s candidacy for office. What should Christian citizens think about as they choose candidates for whom to vote? See Proverbs 16:12; 20:26; 28:15–16a; 18:2; 25:3–5; 29:12. Yet you won’t find a perfect candidate. Why not?

Q5. Why do you need to repent even as you vote?

CONCLUSION

Enter the voting booth with prayer. Include a prayer confessing your own limitations and sin—also your sin as you vote. Here, as in every aspect of life in this fallen world, there is no getting away from iniquity. Even “all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment” (Isaiah 64:6).

“But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to who believe” (Galatians 3:22). You are not perfect, except in this extremely important sense: “True Christian perfection is to fear God from the heart, to have great faith, and to trust that for Christ’s sake we have a God who has been reconciled [2 Corinthians 5:18–19]” (AC XXVII 48). This true Christian perfection “means to ask for and expect from God His help in all things with confident assurance that we are to live according to our calling in life, being diligent in outward good works, serving in our calling” (AC XXVII 49).

The arena of government provides, for Christians who are citizens, opportunities to serve the Lord who bought us and to serve our neighbor. As we serve, we continue to pray fervently: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, keep this nation under Your care. Bless the leaders of our land that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to the other nations of the earth. Grant that we may choose trustworthy leaders, contribute to wise decisions for the general welfare, and serve You faithfully in our generation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Fourth Commandment

Ⓟ *What does the fourth commandment teach us about earthly authorities?*

Ⓢ **Honor your father and your mother.**

Ⓟ *What does this mean?*

Ⓢ **We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.**

The Second Petition

Ⓟ *What does the second petition of the Lord's Prayer teach us to pray while living in God's kingdom in the earthly, civil realm?*

Ⓢ **Thy kingdom come.**

Ⓟ *What does this mean?*

The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

Ⓟ *How does God's kingdom come?*

Ⓢ **God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.**

Litany

LSB 288

Ⓟ O Lord,	Ⓢ have mercy.
Ⓟ O Christ,	Ⓢ have mercy.
Ⓟ O Lord,	Ⓢ have mercy.
Ⓟ O Christ,	Ⓢ hear us.
Ⓟ God the Father in heaven,	Ⓢ have mercy.
Ⓟ God the Son, Redeemer of the world,	Ⓢ have mercy.
Ⓟ God the Holy Spirit,	Ⓢ have mercy.
Ⓟ Be gracious to us.	Ⓢ Spare us, good Lord.
Ⓟ Be gracious to us.	Ⓢ Help us, good Lord.

Ⓟ From all sin, from all error, from all evil;

From the crafts and assaults of the devil; from sudden and evil death;

From pestilence and famine; from war and bloodshed; from sedition and from rebellion;

From lightning and tempest; from all calamity by fire and water; and from everlasting death:

Ⓢ **Good Lord, deliver us.**

Ⓟ By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your holy nativity;

By Your baptism, fasting, and temptation; by Your agony and bloody sweat; by Your cross and passion; by Your precious death and burial;

By Your glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:

Ⓢ **Help us, good Lord.**

Ⓟ In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment:

Ⓢ **Help us, good Lord.**

Ⓟ We poor sinners implore You

Ⓢ **to hear us, O Lord.**

Ⓟ To rule and govern Your holy Christian Church; to preserve all pastors and ministers of Your Church in the true knowledge and understanding of Your wholesome Word and to sustain them in holy living;

To put an end to all schisms and causes of offense; to bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived;

To beat down Satan under our feet; to send faithful laborers into Your harvest; and to accompany Your Word with Your grace and Spirit:

© **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

Ⓟ To raise those who fall and to strengthen those who stand; and to comfort and help the weakhearted and the distressed:

© **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

Ⓟ To give to all peoples concord and peace; to preserve our land from discord and strife; to give our country Your protection in every time of need;

To direct and defend our president and all in authority; to bless and protect our magistrates and all our people;

To watch over and help all who are in danger, necessity, and tribulation; to protect and guide all who travel;

To grant all women with child, and all mothers with infant children, increasing happiness in their blessings; to defend all orphans and widows and provide for them;

To strengthen and keep all sick persons and young children; to free those in bondage; and to have mercy on us all:

© **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

Ⓟ To forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers and to turn their hearts; to give and preserve for our use the kindly fruits of the earth; and graciously to hear our prayers:

© **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

Ⓟ Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

© **we implore You to hear us.**

Ⓟ Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

© **have mercy.**

Ⓟ Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

© **have mercy.**

Ⓟ Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

© **grant us Your peace.**

Ⓟ O Christ,

© **hear us.**

Ⓟ O Lord,

© **have mercy.**

Ⓟ O Christ,

© **have mercy.**

Ⓟ O Lord,

© **have mercy. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Ⓟ Almighty God, You have given us this good land as our heritage. Grant that we remember Your generosity and constantly do Your will. Bless our land with honest industry, truthful education, and an honorable way of life. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil course of action. Grant that we, who came from many nations with many different languages, may become a united people. Support us in defending our liberties, and give those to whom we have entrusted the authority of government the spirit of wisdom, that there may be justice and peace in our land. When times are prosperous, may our hearts be thankful, and in troubled times do not let our trust in You fail; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

© **Amen.**

Ⓟ Lord, in Your mercy,

© **hear our prayer.**

Ⓟ Call on Me in the day of trouble.

© **I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me.**

Ⓟ Spare us, O Lord, and mercifully forgive us our sins. Though by our continual transgressions we have merited Your chastisements, be gracious to us. Grant that all these punishments which we have deserved may not come upon us, but that all things may work to our everlasting good; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

© **Amen.**