

What Would Government Look Like if It Matched Up With Scripture?

In a recent presidential debate, Democratic Candidate Pete Buttigieg used the Bible to defend a minimum wage increase. “[S]cripture says that whoever oppresses the poor taunts their maker,” he said, referencing Proverbs 14:31.

Although the terms “Christian” and “conservative” are often used synonymously, the church is much more complex and diverse than she is usually made out to be.

The people in our lives who see things we don’t see are there to lovingly point out our blind spots and broaden our perspective.

Some aspects of Buttigieg’s expression of his faith are controversial among evangelical believers. Still, his biblical defense of raising the minimum wage resembles the convictions of many Christians who do not identify with the political ideologies of their conservative brothers and sisters.

Identifying as conservative or liberal does not make you more or less Christ-like. Christians across the political spectrum have firm convictions solely based on their religious beliefs. Rather than demonize each other, we should strive to learn from each other.

Loving and Learning From Our Rivals

The apostle James points out two defining characteristics of genuine Christianity:

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:27, HCSB)

This Scripture is referenced often, but most people only quote the first characteristic—caring for orphans and widows—and forget about the second one. James, however, preaches both social justice and personal morality because he knows how easy it is to overemphasize one to the detriment of the other.

Left-leaning Christians sometimes emphasize taking care of the marginalized but are willing to compromise their values for the sake of compassion. Meanwhile, those on the right often stress remaining “unstained by the world,” but sometimes forget to get involved in it.

James’ point, however, is that you do not have “pure and undefiled” religion without both.

Author C. S. Lewis makes the same point in his classic, *Mere Christianity*:

“[T]he New Testament gives us a pretty clear hint of what a fully Christian society would be like,” Lewis says. “Perhaps it gives us more than we can take.”

Lewis asserts that the biblical model of Christian community often appears both socially liberal and ethically and morally conservative.

“If there were such a [Christian] society in existence and you or I visited it, I think we should come away with a curious impression,” Lewis observes. “We should feel that its economic life was very socialistic and, in that sense, ‘advanced,’ but that its family life and its code of manners were rather old-fashioned—perhaps even ceremonious and aristocratic. Each of us would like some bits of it, but I am afraid very few of us would like the whole thing.”

Lewis ends with this thought: “That is why people who are fighting for quite opposite things can both say they are fighting for Christianity.”

Embracing Diversity Like Jesus

Thanks to the internet and social media, we converse less often than ever before with people who disagree with us. We can easily find a community of people who sing our praises no matter what we believe. We find ourselves in echo chambers, only interacting with people who agree with us and rarely with those who have different perspectives, values or convictions.

The truth is, we need each other. The people in our lives who see things we don't see are there to lovingly point out our blind spots and broaden our perspective. Right-leaning Christians need their left-leaning brothers and sisters to help remind them that compassion should always take precedence over personal prosperity and security. And Christians who lean to the left need their conservative counterparts to help keep them grounded in historic Christian orthodoxy and morality.

It's easier to demonize than listen to each other. It's easier to avoid than commune with each other. Unity is difficult because it requires cooperation, change and even compromise.

But it's important to remember that no group has a monopoly on morality. We need each other because we need to encounter perspectives different than our own. Jesus taught us to love our enemies. Let's follow His example and embrace those our culture tells us to demonize.

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