



Loving our nation well: A resource for Christians and Churches

God created the nations, He encouraged their diverse creativity, and the glory and honour of every nation will be celebrated in the New Jerusalem at the end of time¹.

As Christians, we have dual citizenship - our national and our eternal one in Christ². We can be proud of both.

But what does it mean to love our nation from God's perspective and to be loyal to it when we know that Christ demands that we put our loyalty to Him and His Kingdom first?

And how do we do this in our troubled, changing times where politics seems so confusing and angry?

It's important that we work this out: Individually, as local Church and as Church across the nation. If we find it hard to talk with fellow Christians about the state of our country and politics without getting emotional, it is even more important that we do so! We will just need to take more time to pray, to listen to one another and learn to understand without judging.

A few biblical foundations before we go any further

Christ is Lord and creator of all, and will judge all government that does not follow His ways³. It is the Bible, both Old and New Testament, which tells us what these ways are. Let us continue to look carefully at all of Scripture to understand what our country would look like if it truly were "Christian". The standard is radically challenging⁴.

The Church is not a human institution but the Bride of Christ and one day will have members from every tribe and nation on earth⁵. A particular denomination may have special status as national Church, but it

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Revelation 21: 26.

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Philippians 3: 20.

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Colossians 1: 15-17, Isaiah 40: 23.

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From loving social support provided through extended families to commands for absolute sexual purity to strong condemnation of any unfair treatment of workers to a financial system that will not place people into permanent debt, these are just the beginnings of what Scripture says are God's radical standards for how societies should be run.

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Revelation 21:2, Revelation 7: 9.

is still, or should be, independent from the State. Christians are a holy people belonging to God⁶. We must be in the world but not of it. Christians engage with society and with politics but we remain distinct. We must always protect our freedom to live in obedience to Christ, to proclaim the Gospel to all and to make disciples, to affirm what is good in our culture and to speak prophetically when things are wrong. If rulers, political or spiritual, try to oppose our obedience to Christ, there is a place for challenging their authority⁷.

The role of government is God given but limited. It is to maintain peace, administer justice and ensure that the weak are protected. Government is also subject to God's law, whether it acknowledges this or not. Rulers are to bring blessing⁸.

Working things out for ourselves - Questions to consider.

Guidance. *Please pick the questions that are appropriate. It is better to look at just a few questions prayerfully and well than to rush. If disagreement arises when you discuss with others, please work to listen carefully to one another, pausing to pray again if necessary. Do not dismiss each other's concerns or points of view. Let people share without judging. Seek to understand, even if you may not agree. Take time to pray together. It is possible that the conversation will raise emotions. If so, then you may need to pause the discussion but try to agree when you will talk again. Where there is hurt or tension, the Lord wants to bring reconciliation. He wants unity for His people.*

1. What do we love most about our nation? What do we imagine might be the glory and honour of our nation represented in the New Jerusalem?
2. What are the biggest dangers that our nation faces?
3. Are there any politicians calling for absolute loyalty to them or to the nation?
4. Is there a political movement in our country that promotes Christian values and our nation's Christian heritage? Considering the breadth of values expressed in Scripture, how Christian is this vision? What do we imagine Jesus is pleased with and not pleased with? If the values are Christian, are the foundations they are built on also Christian?
5. All humans are sinful. Power can corrupt. We may need strong leaders but too much power in the hands of a few is always dangerous. Are there political movements that do not seem to understand the importance of rule of law and democratic control through its people and its institutions, including an independent judiciary, media and political opposition?

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1 Peter 2: 9.

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Acts 5:28-29, Acts 16:37, Acts 23: 1-5.

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Proverbs 31:4-9, Romans 13: 1-4, 1 Peter 2: 13-14, 1 Kings 21: 1-19, 2 Samuel 23: 3-4.

6. Our nation may face problems that many political parties seem to ignore. We may like certain politicians because they have the courage to address difficult stuff. If so, let's check
 - a. Are they doing so accurately and fairly?
 - b. Is unfair or exaggerated blaming of others going on? Are politicians creating a "them versus us" scenario?
 - c. Are proposed solutions likely to work for the good of all in our community?
7. The Gospel is for all⁹. In Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile¹⁰, and we are called to love "the Samaritan¹¹", the one that society despises. Is there anything in our nation's political rhetoric which is making it harder for the Church to welcome all, including those that present day culture rejects? Is the term "Christian" being misused to exclude?
8. There are many minorities living in our nation. In some cases, there are some big cultural differences. Is political rhetoric likely to make it more or less likely that solutions can be found to cultural issues which might cause tensions? How does each political movement want to support minorities in belonging within our national family¹²?
9. How do our political movements speak about our country's neighbours? Have we forgiven those that have harmed us in the past? Are cooperation, mutual respect and solidarity likely to increase or decrease? How can Christians help?
10. There are big international challenges, including care for the destitute, the "orphan and widow". We are proud of our nation. What does it mean for our nation to act honourably towards the most vulnerable, both home and abroad? Does this match with what politicians are saying?
11. When a political party or politician we like says or does what is blatantly wrong in God's eyes, will we admit this to ourselves and then speak up?
12. We are rightly proud of our national identity. Bearing in mind the current political atmosphere and the character and teachings of Christ, are we optimistic or pessimistic about the future? What are our hopes for our nation?

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Acts 20: 21.

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Galatians 3: 28.

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Luke 10: 25-37.

¹² The Bible mentions 2 categories of immigrants. The *ger* was generally desperate, coming to Israel to survive. He or she was expected to integrate into Israeli life. Israelites were commanded to love and accept him/her. The *nokri* remained economically independent and did not integrate. Israelites were warned to show caution towards those who made no signs to integrate but to welcome if they did. Thus we can surmise that Scripture requires both the immigrant to integrate and the host community to welcome. Each side has a role to play, each side needs the other to make it possible for them to do their part.

13. Politics is increasingly angry and polarised. How can we pray for our nation and the wellbeing of all in our community in ways that all Christians can wholeheartedly support and that will be powerful in asking the Lord to achieve His Kingdom purposes in our nation?

Final questions

14. What have we learned from considering these questions? Do we need to do some more praying, thinking or talking?
15. Are there any practical steps that the Lord wants us to take?