

INTERSECT

College Chat Discussion Starters

College Chat: Contemporary Issues: Life and Death

SESSION 1: THE CHRISTIAN AS CITIZEN

Intersect the Word

Matthew 22:15-22; Acts 4:13-20; 5:27-32; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-17

- How does Jesus differentiate between government and God in Matthew 22:15-22?
 - How do the disciples follow that pattern in the Early Church?
 - What is a Christian definition of citizenship?
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Take Your Choice

It is time to elect members to the city council, and you are a registered voter. Two men are running from your district, and you know them both.

The first man is a member of an evangelical church not far from yours. He is a Sunday School teacher and a member of the Board of Directors there. In the past 15 years this man has had four businesses, all of which have failed because of his poor management. He does not have a college education and, frankly, isn't too bright. But he is a dedicated Christian.

The second man has already had a splendid

career in public service. He was a history teacher at the local high school before he went into business with his brother designing computer software for local governments, a business which has been very successful. After he started his business, he served two terms on the local school board, where he proved himself to be a capable policy maker. He has also served on several committees and boards for the municipal government. But he is not a Christian. He attends no church and at times seems proud of this.

Now, which man will you vote for?

Christian Citizen

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,

At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can." —John Wesley

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- What do you think Wesley means by this quote?
- Do you think you, your church, your state, your

country would be different if Christians lived like this quote? Why, or why not? If so, how?

Separation of Church and State

On the surface, it would seem an easy thing to do to keep the Church and the state separated. But there are some issues which *force* them into conflict. Consider the following list of issues which have split Christian groups and frustrated lawmakers and judges in recent years. How would you decide these issues?

1. The church in America (including all denominations) owns millions of dollars in real estate and other property, yet it is exempt from paying taxes. Is that not government support of religion? Could not the federal deficit be helped by forcing the church and other religious institutions to pay tax?
2. In previous times, it was not uncommon for school children to begin their day by saying the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag and then reciting the Lord's Prayer. But non-Christian parents complained that such a prayer implies official sanction of the Christian religion. Even a "time of silent meditation" during which a student could pray or not pray has been ruled illegal. Is the government protecting religion or suppressing it?
3. Some religious groups, most notably the Church of Christ, Scientist, believes that spiritual heal-

ing is real and that medical healing is sinful. Sometimes parents withhold medical care from their children because of their religious beliefs. When the courts rule that such a procedure is child abuse and force the parents to submit their children for medical care, is the government infringing on a family's freedom to practice its own religion?

4. Many conservative churches have begun operating day schools and even elementary and secondary schools. State governments insist that these schools meet the same requirements as secular schools. Some church schools have claimed that that amounts to government intrusion on religious education. Does the government have the right to determine the qualifications of a teacher in a church-run elementary school?
5. Many cities have passed ordinances prohibiting employment discrimination against minorities, including homosexuals. Church-owned operations, such as schools, printing companies, and recreation centers have complained, stating that their theology would prohibit giving a job to someone they consider to have a sinful lifestyle. Should a government body be able to force a church-owned operation to hire a homosexual?

Getting Started . . . Christian Citizen

Following through with one's responsibilities is an important part of life. Sometimes we confuse our rights with the privileges a government can give its citizens. With those privileges comes responsibility. For example, being able to drive a car is not a "right" but a privilege and with that privilege comes the responsibility to follow the rules of the road.

As a citizen we have privileges that we need to follow up with some responsibilities. Below are a few examples; add to the list:

1. Follow the local, national, and world news

2. Vote at every opportunity—it's a privilege many don't have
3. Volunteer in your community
4. Serve in your church—another privilege many don't have
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.