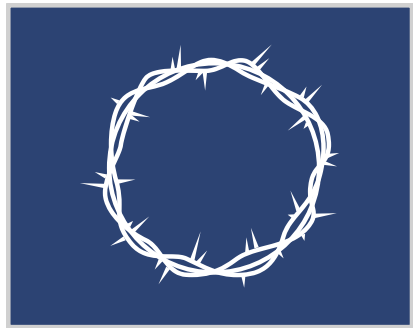
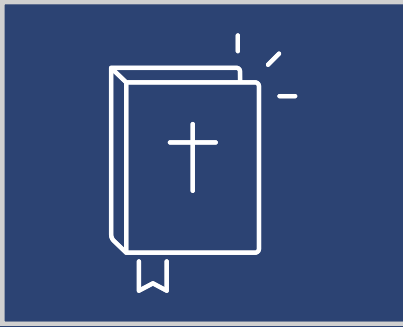




BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**





FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

In the Church Ambassador Network, a ministry of the Christian Education League, we hold to the teachings of the Bible that God created government for our good. When government does its job well, the people are blessed, and that is exactly what we want to see in the State of Maine. We want to see a criminal justice system that is a blessing to all people, regardless of color, education, socioeconomic status, or any other societal classification.

As we consider criminal justice, an excellent place to begin is at the Cross of Jesus, the most consequential verdict of justice in all human history. We cannot fully understand justice without understanding the Cross.

GOD IS FULLY MERCIFUL.

If God were not merciful, Jesus would not have had to die. God could have simply let us suffer the consequences of our sins; but because He is merciful, we have the Cross.

GOD IS FULLY JUST.

If God were not just, Jesus would not have had to die. God could have simply forgiven our sins; but because He is just, we have the Cross.

GOD IS FULLY JUST AND MERCIFUL ALL THE TIME.

God is not 50% just and 50% merciful. This is hard for us to comprehend. As humans, we tend to be just one moment and merciful another. But God is always just, and He is always merciful.

GOD WILL ULTIMATELY BRING PERFECT JUSTICE.

Though our governing authorities work to bring justice today, God is the true source of justice and mercy. He will bring it about perfectly. The burden does not rest on their shoulders; it rests on His.



GOVERNMENT IS THE PEOPLE'S SERVANT. THIS APPLIES TO ALL ASPECTS OF OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, INCLUDING PEACE OFFICERS, JUDGES, ATTORNEYS, AND JURIES.

People are not here to serve the criminal justice system. Rather the system is here to serve ALL people. Those who serve in our government are to be the people's guide and protector. They are to hold the interests of all people even above their own. To serve in government is a high calling, and that must be the attitude of all who serve in our criminal justice system.



“FOR GOVERNMENT IS GOD’S SERVANT FOR YOUR GOOD.”

ROMANS 13:4

“JESUS CALLED THEM TOGETHER AND SAID, “YOU KNOW THAT THOSE WHO ARE REGARDED AS RULERS OF THE GENTILES LORD IT OVER THEM, AND THEIR HIGH OFFICIALS EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THEM. NOT SO WITH YOU. INSTEAD, WHOEVER WANTS TO BECOME GREAT AMONG YOU MUST BE YOUR SERVANT, AND WHOEVER WANTS TO BE FIRST MUST BE SLAVE OF ALL. FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY.”

MARK 10:42-45



GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE A DREAD TO THE WRONG-DOERS AND A SENSE OF PEACE TO THE INNOCENT.

As we look at our criminal justice system, it is important to understand that lawbreakers should be concerned when they see a peace officer or other governing authority. It is also important to recognize that government is a public servant designed to protect people. The innocent should feel a sense of peace, not fear, when they see a peace officer or governing authority.



“FOR RULERS ARE NOT A TERROR TO GOOD CONDUCT, BUT TO BAD. DO YOU WANT TO BE UNAFRAID OF THE AUTHORITY? DO WHAT IS GOOD, AND YOU WILL HAVE ITS APPROVAL. FOR GOVERNMENT IS GOD’S SERVANT FOR YOUR GOOD. BUT IF YOU DO WRONG, BE AFRAID, BECAUSE IT DOES NOT CARRY THE SWORD FOR NO REASON.”

ROMANS 13:3-4



JUSTICE IS TO BE FAIR AND BALANCED. IT IS NOT TO BE PARTIAL.

The law serves as a guide, protector, and corrector. It guides us to a better way of living, to the path to life. It protects us from ourselves and those who wish to pursue actions that bring harm and death. And it corrects our behavior through punishments that fit the crime, with the goal of bringing us back to the path of life.

If the criminal justice system shows any bias and fails to seek what is just and true, it no longer accomplishes what God designed it to do. Not only does it lose the trust of the people, it also becomes a harm to the very ones it was designed to serve. Our criminal justice system is dependent upon the pursuit of truth, fair and balanced justice for all people.



“UNEQUAL WEIGHTS ARE DETESTABLE TO THE LORD, AND DISHONEST SCALES ARE NO GOOD.”

PROVERBS 20:23



WE ARE TO HONOR AND PRAY FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY, INCLUDING THOSE SERVING IN OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Those who work in our criminal justice system are public servants. It is important that we honor, thank, and pray for them as they serve and sacrifice for us. Not only does this strengthen our communities, it also glorifies the Lord.

We do not give honor and thanksgiving because the person deserves it. In reality, none of us are deserving. Rather, we show respect and gratitude because we desire to please our Lord. We are honoring far more than a person. We are honoring the institution and ideals they represent.



"I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL, THAT PETITIONS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR ALL PEOPLE— FOR KINGS AND ALL THOSE IN AUTHORITY, THAT WE MAY LIVE PEACEFUL AND QUIET LIVES IN ALL GODLINESS AND HOLINESS. THIS IS GOOD, AND PLEASES GOD OUR SAVIOR, WHO WANTS ALL PEOPLE TO BE SAVED AND TO COME TO A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH."

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4



CRIMINAL PUNISHMENT SHOULD BE RELEGATED TO A SPECIFIC SENTENCE, NOT BECOME A LIFE-LONG IDENTIFIER.

It is important that justice is served and proper sentences befitting to the crimes are fulfilled. However, people should not be identified by their crimes. Once they have fulfilled their sentences, they should be able to return to society and begin rebuilding their lives.

The Gospel is a story of “second chances.” When our debt of sin was paid on the Cross, we were not identified by our sin. Rather we were identified by our new life following the payment of our sin.

Our criminal justice system must reflect just sentencing, as well as a life beyond the prison system for those who are able to fulfill their sentences in their lifetime.



“TO PUT OFF YOUR OLD SELF, WHICH BELONGS TO YOUR FORMER MANNER OF LIFE AND IS CORRUPT THROUGH DECEITFUL DESIRES, AND TO BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MINDS, AND TO PUT ON THE NEW SELF, CREATED AFTER THE LIKENESS OF GOD IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS.”

EPHESIANS 4:22-24



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