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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

Five Definitive Characteristics of Righteous Leadership



Proverbs 14:34 contains a sound political maxim, the simplicity of which is often overlooked: personal **righteousness** in the population—both in citizens and leaders—is the single most important commodity any country can possess! This virtue, states Solomon, is preeminent to everything else, because

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

The writer of Proverbs, King Solomon, whom Scripture states was the wisest man to ever live, proclaims in this passage that personal **righteousness** is the most important ingredient—and should be the focus—in order to achieve the advancement of any nation. Solomon does not say that

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White House Cabinet and Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served

Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served

House Members: Thursdays 8am, Natural Resources, Longworth 1334, hot breakfast served



PUBLIC SERVANT
QUOTE

Dan Patrick

Lieutenant Governor of Texas



“Our nation was built upon the Word of God. Our founders and the people they governed understood they must be led by godly people who, while imperfect themselves, strived to build a country based on God’s perfection.

“Today, in a country where God’s Word is under constant attack, we need mighty oaks to serve in all levels of government. Men and women of courage and commitment who will stand for the principles and values our nation was founded upon.”

Five Definitive Characteristics of Righteous Leadership

the presence of natural resources *exalts a nation*, nor does he say that it is attributable to the excellence of its education system, as important as those are, among other things. Rather, personal *righteousness* is what is the most important!

Read on, friend.

bestowal of blessing and favor, of overall well-being.

The exaltation of a nation is intrinsically intertwined with the *righteousness* of its leaders.

I. INTRODUCTION

The five traits of *righteousness* that must characterize a nation’s leaders are the same qualities, in fact, that serve to *exalt a nation*. The Greek word for *righteousness* (*dikaiosune*) is used 86 times in the New Testament (NT). The simplest and easiest way to remember the definition of this word is “right-way-ness.” Careful observation of Proverbs 14:34 reveals a nationalistic summation of the cause-and-effect relationship between *righteousness* and *exaltation*. Great nations, great leaders, great employees, great family members are always characterized by the following definitive biblical characteristics of *righteousness*—that’s what makes them great! It should be noted at the outset that there are many who practice the following five characteristics of biblical *righteousness*, borrowing from the heavenly Author of such, but yet giving no attribution to their source.

In an individual sense, when a leader lives with God’s character, he places himself in a position to be blessed by God, while unrighteous leaders are never in a place or position where God can extend them His divine favor in as gracious a proportion.

Per Proverbs 14:34, a nation’s proportion of blessing is directly related and tantamount to the sum total of the *righteousness* quotient of its individual leaders. It is only when a nation is blessed with high-principled individuals that it places itself in a position to gain God’s

Given this cut-to-the-chase analysis of a nation’s greatest need, the question quickly becomes one of how *righteousness* is best formed in the life of leaders. The answer is that it is imputed to those who put their trust in Jesus Christ. Therefore, as we will see, the critical, pre-eminent duty of all believers is to witness for Christ and lead others to Him; in essence it is to Christianize the citizenry. Conversion of the soul, Solomon will postulate, not moral foisting, is the only way to breed lasting, *righteous* individuals. Accordingly, in our composite nation (where both Church and State exist but are institutionally separated), the state is dependent on believers to diligently evangelize and disciple the unregenerate citizenry of the state. And the degree to which believers are faithful evangelizers and disciplers is directly proportional to the health of the state. Proverbs 11:10–11, 28:12, and 29:2 serve to underscore this critically important relationship:

When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting. By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.

When the righteous triumph, there is great glory, but when the wicked rise, men hide themselves.

When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan.



As previously evidenced in Proverbs 14:34 and the above passages, we can conclude the following:

The book of Proverbs repeatedly screams about the relationship between the existence of *righteous* governmental leaders as they relate to the overall health of a city or nation.

A small number of believers think that Christians should give no pause for the state; rather they believe Christians should focus solely on advancing God's Kingdom. But these passages serve—in fact they shout—that God expects the *righteous* life of the believer, especially a nation's *righteous* political leaders, to positively affect the cities and nations where they live and serve! The above passages are not about the heavenly sweet by and by; they relate to the here and now. Given this clear and repeated cause-and-effect relationship between the existence of *righteousness* in leaders and the course a country takes, as a public servant how are you doing in terms of your spiritual growth, your maturation in Christ, your *righteousness* quotient?

II. THE GERMINATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The necessity of evangelism by the people of God in order to birth and develop *righteous* individuals in order to achieve an ongoing healthy, *exalted* nation is explicitly articulated in Proverbs 11:30:

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls.

In beautifully imaging Solomonic poetry, the picture of *a tree of life*, serves to illus-

trate the far-reaching effects of *the fruit of the righteous*. This *fruit* generally includes influence, productivity, instruction, and example of the righteous. But notice specifically what is added to the definition of *fruit* in this passage: evangelism or the *winning of souls*. Here we find yet another exclamatory underscoring of the integral relationship between the importance of evangelism, which results in the indwelling Holy Spirit, whom elsewhere in Scripture Jesus calls the Helper, and the outward manifestation of righteousness in culture.

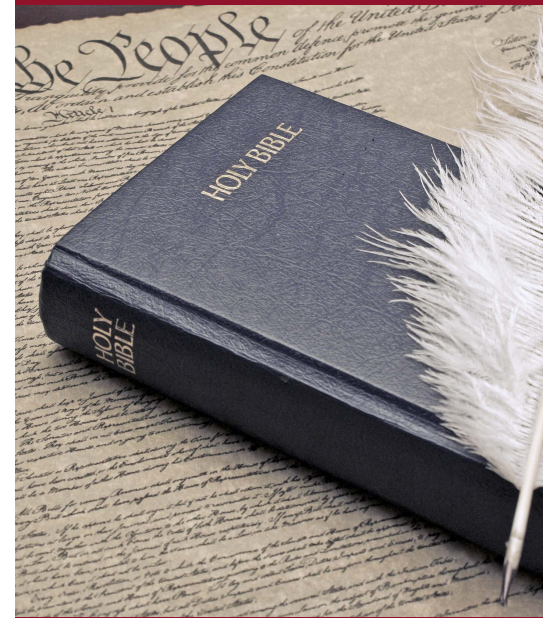
To illustrate the priority and fostering of the spiritual dimension in the life of the citizen and the way in which that plays out in culture, note John 4, when Jesus visited the woman at the well. He was no doubt very thirsty and in need of water, but He set aside His personal needs to win the woman to salvation. He momentarily placed aside His own physical thirst in order to achieve a much higher priority: the conversion of her soul, the beginning of *righteous* living! Her soul was the most important thing on His mind. The passage reveals that Jesus was most concerned for her personal salvation. In John 8, the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus and demanded she be stoned. But when Jesus said, *“He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her,”* the men walked away one by one. By telling the woman, *“Go and sin no more,”* Jesus indicated there were to be cultural consequences to her conversion: she would turn her back on adultery which threatens the moral fabric of any society, more specifically the nuclear family, the very foundation of any and all nations. If only we had more believers in our various seats of government who held to such clear priorities of winning other's souls over and above their career objectives. Solomon says that prioritizing this is *wise*. It is *wise*

VERSE OF THE WEEK



Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

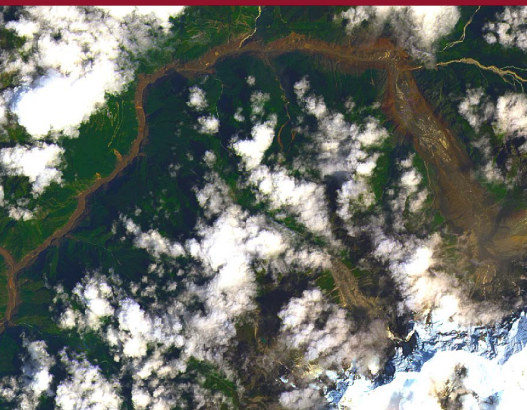


Personal *righteousness* in the population—both citizens and leaders—is the single most important commodity that any country can possess!



MINISTRY UPDATE

Pray for Nepal: Tragedy, Recovery, and an Exciting Ministry Opportunity



During Capitol Ministries' Worldwide Zoom Call last Friday, September 4, Kumar Praja, Capitol Ministries' Director for Asia, shared a moving update on the aftermath of the devastating flash flood in Nepal.

At the time Kumar spoke, the tragedy had claimed 1,287 lives, with more than 5,000 people still missing. Kumar, who lives in Nepal, explained that the flooding occurred just 43 kilometers from his home and that some of his friends are among those still missing.

"This is a heartbreaking tragedy. We mourn the lives lost and grieve for our fellow countrymen who are still missing. We are united in helping our nation recover and trusting God to bring healing to our land. We know that God is with us and will lead us through this valley of the shadow of death," Kumar said.

Despite the devastation, Kumar shared that there is no reason

because it so impacts and affects the life and the culture! May we "*seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness*" (Matthew 6:33) not only in our own lives, but in the lives of others. To do so is to create an evergreen *tree of life* in any given nation.

Charles Bridges has this to say in regard to the absence of soul winning:

The Christian who neglects his brother's salvation, fearfully hazards [weakens] his own. He is gone back to his native selfishness, if he does not exhibit that 'love and kindness of God that has appeared unto men,' ... how poor is the mitre (head dressing) or the crown; how debasing the wisdom of the philosopher, the scholar, or the statesman, compared with this wisdom!¹

The most important and wisest use of our time and resources in the capital is that of winning the lost: creating by the imputation of the Holy Spirit men and women who will *hunger and thirst after righteousness* their whole lives (see Matthew 5:6)! Summarily,

**It is the winning of
souls that fosters
righteousness in a nation.**

How misguided and uninformed is the thinking of those who do not prioritize evangelism and discipleship, God's means of creating *righteous* individuals! Rarely is that formula postulated as the solution to America's downward trajectory that is often defined through a political lens only. Have we not come to grips with the profundity of these passages? Do we just not believe them? Perhaps this is attributable to the famine

of biblical literacy in the Capitol and the nation? If indeed it is *righteousness* that *exalts a nation*, is not the priority of evangelism the key to a great country more than any other thing we might spend our time trying to accomplish? What could be a more important use of our time than soul winning?

Stemming from the conversion of the soul and regeneration in Christ, Solomon states that the five following characteristics of *righteous* leadership can take root and have long lasting effects; when you unpack the book of Proverbs relative to this subject, Solomon is saying that it is these definitive aspects of *righteousness* that serve to *exalt a nation*.

III. FIVE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF RIGHTEOUS LEADERSHIP

How do you specifically define what *righteousness* looks like—what are characteristic manifestations of its presence in a statesman? What follows are all the passages from Proverbs that have to do with *righteousness* and define what *righteous* leadership should look like. In order to *exalt a nation* a leader must take on the following characteristics.

A. TO BE RIGHTEOUS MEANS YOU MUST KNOW YOUR CALLING

In Proverbs 16:12, Solomon provides insights to his son, Rehoboam, the next leader of Israel, as to what it is that will *establish* or secure his reign, his position of leadership:

It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, for a throne is established on righteousness.

In the heart of a public servant there must be a regard for others whom he serves as being more important than

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himself (every believer is encouraged to think this way in Philippians 2:3 and following). God requires that leaders whom He appoints to govern a country, His ordained institution of the state (Romans 13:1), be a blessing to the people they serve—benefactors to the world in which they live. Ecclesiastes 8:9 specifically speaks to the selflessness a leader must possess in his job: *A man has exercised authority over another to his own hurt*. This is a powerful way of putting it: a leader is to be so selfless that it *hurts* him! It is only from this biblical theology, the ensuing knowledge of this biblical theology, his understanding of this biblical theology, and his submission to this biblical theology, that one can possibly possess the realization that God has called him to office to serve in this way! Only then can selfish motives possibly be eradicated and replaced by the *righteous* motives of selfless service commanded in Scripture!

If a leader is secure and settled in the fact that it is God who called him—Psalm 75:4-7 insightfully and profoundly states that in His sovereignty *He puts down one and exalts another*—then and only then is there no temptation to engineer your destiny; then and only then is there no temptation to perform the *wicked acts* often associated with self-preservation. Be sure of this:

Abominable wicked acts grow in the soil of self-preservation; whereas the soil of “God placed me here” nurtures a totally different variety of leader.

The DNA of the second variety is this: “It is God who put me here for the betterment of others; I understand my calling

and I am secure in it.” In essence then, believing that “it is God who placed me here” is the belief that leads to *a throne established on righteousness*! If you want to *establish* yourself in office then live securely according to your theology, your calling! It follows that an officeholder who is self-centered will become less *established* due to his ensuing and inevitable unrighteousness. A recent illustration of this is a past American president who promised the nation’s citizens that they could keep their own doctor and coverage under his new nationwide insurance plan. As it turned out, that was not the case. As a result of his *unrighteous* behavior, his approval ratings dropped, meaning he became less *established* in office.

The relationship between *righteousness* and being established parallels the previously seen relationship between *righteousness* and *exaltation*: *righteous* character and behavior lead to being *established* and being *exalted* both individually and in a national sense. So, while behaving *wickedly* stems from thinking you are self-appointed and, therefore, must be self-preserving, *righteous* behavior stems from knowing your calling in Christ, knowing He appointed you to office. Such *exalts a nation*.

B. TO BE RIGHTEOUS MEANS YOU MUST BE JUST

A major responsibility of civil government is *the punishment of evildoers* (1 Peter 2:13–14). Within that realm of responsibility is the dispatch of just treatment through due process. A major responsibility of every elected official, then, is to make sure the city, county, state, or nation has an excellent judicial system, especially God-fearing *righteous* judges. States Proverbs 20:8 in this regard:

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to change plans or reschedule Capitol Ministries’ upcoming training conference in Kathmandu, September 28–30. The conference will gather Christian leaders from 19 nations who are eager to be trained and equipped to reach public servants with the Gospel.

Prior to the flooding, Kumar had a unique opportunity to present Capitol Ministries to the leadership of the Indochina Revival Movement. The response was remarkable: pastors and Bible teachers representing 10 countries approached him afterward, expressing their interest in Capitol Ministries and their desire to take a step of faith toward launching ministries in their nations.

“We had planned a small training in Kathmandu this September, but it appears the Lord has bigger plans!” said Danielle Drollinger, Capitol Ministries’ President. “The Lord is using Capitol Ministries in an amazing way, and we want to faithfully follow wherever He leads.”

Please join us in praying for the recovery and rebuilding efforts in Nepal and in thanking the Lord for His continued work throughout Asia.

If you would like to support Kumar’s work with Capitol Ministries in Asia, please scan the QR code below.





MINISTRY LEADER PROFILE

Harvey Sparks, III

State Ministry Leader
Oklahoma



“After serving six years on Capitol Hill, I have seen firsthand how vital it is for those in public service to possess a deep and abiding faith.”

Pastor Harvey Sparks has served as Capitol Ministries’ State Ministry Leader to the Oklahoma Legislature since 2024.

Pastor Harvey succeeded Ray Strauss, who faithfully led the ministry from 2023. With more than 20 years of ministry experience as a scholar, missionary, and pastor, Harvey sees this role as a perfect alignment with his lifelong passion—teaching the Word of God.

“It is vital to reach lawmakers with the Gospel. Transformed hearts lead to better policy,” he explains. “I’m grateful that Capitol Ministries focuses on the hearts of legislators—not their votes.”

Harvey’s diverse background uniquely equips him for this mission. He has served as a

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Five Definitive Characteristics of Righteous Leadership

A king who sits on the throne of justice disperses all evil with his eyes.

From the time of Moses, the leaders of Israel were judges which also meant they were chief executives (and often prophets). Then, when kings replaced the judges, Israel’s kings would decree **justice** from their throne. They were to rule in fear of God. So it should be today in our lawmaking, enforcement, and adjudication. Proverbs 24:23-25 puts it this way:

These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good. He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous,” peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him; but to those who rebuke the wicked will be delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.

So great should be the judicial **righteousness** of national leaders that they rule with total social and economic impartiality. Proverbs 31:8–9 states:

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

It is only through **righteous** lawmakers, enforcers, and courts that a state can have any semblance of **justice**. **Judging righteously** stems from **righteous** leaders for sure. But how are those **righteous** leaders created, raised, and groomed?

How does the state gain noble leaders?

In God’s design they are to be manufactured, if you will, by the institution of the Church: God-fearing individuals are created, raised, and groomed by the discipleship priorities of believers in a composite nation in which the co-abiding

institutions of Church and State exist. **Wise** is the State that upholds religious freedom so as to provide the Church ease in manufacturing what it most desperately requires: the next generation of **righteous** State leaders who uphold **justice**. The second of the five characteristics of **righteousness** is **justice**. Are you **just**? Such **exalts a nation**.

C. TO BE RIGHTEOUS MEANS YOU MUST BE DISCERNING

If **righteousness exalts a nation**, then good discernment by a public servant—to associate with people of integrity—is a sure path to national prosperity. To ignore the worldview and behavior of those in your inner circle is to be unduly, continually tempted by evil. “**Bad company corrupts good morals**” candidly states Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33. Like begets like.

Too often righteous elected officials associate with or hire the wrong kind of people who do not represent their values.

Don’t let that be the case with you. Your staff must represent your values in order to be effective in the long run. In Proverbs 25:5, Solomon addresses his son in regard to this issue:

Take away the wicked before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.

One specific form of **wickedness before the king** is highlighted several chapters later by Solomon: personal bribery. Bribery can undermine the best of legal constructs. Samuel’s sons took bribes, and it ruined Israel. States Solomon in this regard in Proverbs 29:4:



The king gives stability to the land by justice, but a man who takes bribes overthrows it.

The *wise* statesman associates with and hires people who represent his or her godly character. On the other hand, embracing *wicked* people will ruin your office; you are playing with fire! Far from *establishing* you, they will harm you, misrepresent you, and may even corrupt you! The third of the five characteristics of *righteousness* is your ability to be discerning. Are you discerning? Such *exalts a nation*.

D. TO BE RIGHTEOUS MEANS YOU MUST HAVE CONVICTIONS

While convictions are more than having knowledge of scriptural truths, they are nothing less. It takes courage to implement biblical knowledge; but it is only upon implementation that knowledge can become a conviction. Proverbs 25:26 says:

Like a trampled spring and a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

To lack conviction as a believer is often an indication of biblical illiteracy if not a lack of courage.

For a Christian elected official to fail to be principled—to compromise biblical absolutes—in his policies or interactions with others grievously tarnishes his testimony and the corporate testimony of the body of Christ. The fourth of the five characteristics of *righteousness* is conviction. Are you a leader of conviction? Such *exalts a nation*.

E. TO BE RIGHTEOUS MEANS YOU MUST BE PRAYERFUL

The last of the five characteristics of *righteousness* found in Proverbs is that of being *prayerful*. Note what Proverbs 15:8-9 says:

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD; but He loves one who pursues righteousness.

In these two back-to-back Proverbs of parallelism, *prayer* is equated with *righteousness* (the second stanzas of both passages). What every country most needs are men and women beseeching God's guidance in their personal and state affairs. Furthermore, here is something very important to understand about this:

Scripture tells us that God only hears the prayers of leaders and citizens who are upright and righteous from His perspective, meaning they have placed their faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture is clear here. For those who are at odds with God, who passively or actively reject the Son of God, their prayers, beyond the *prayer* of repentance, go unheard. Proverbs 15:29 is clear in this regard:

The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

The fifth of the five characteristics of *righteousness* is *prayerfulness*. Are you *prayerful*? Such *exalts a nation*.

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Legislative Aide in Washington, D.C., a church-planting missionary in Mozambique, a local church pastor, and an adjunct seminary professor. "I have taught the Bible in the local church, on the mission field, and in the classroom," he says. "God's Word never returns void—it always accomplishes His purposes."

His ministry goal is clear: "To engage both legislators and their staff in order to proclaim the truth of God's Word without error, so that it might do a transforming work in them."

Harvey is married to Jenifer and together they are raising five children—three adopted and two biological. He holds a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Believing that in-depth Bible study is essential for political leaders, Harvey emphasizes that Scripture provides the spiritual foundation needed to govern with wisdom and integrity. "Scripture gives us everything we need for life and godliness," he says. "If we are to disciple legislators, we must remain faithful to the careful teaching of God's Word."

Today, Harvey leads Capitol Ministries' long-standing discipleship ministry and weekly Bible study for members of the Oklahoma Legislature. His deep faith, extensive ministry experience, and years of public service equip him to faithfully teach the Word of God and bear the name of Christ before Oklahoma's lawmakers.



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IV. CONCLUSION

All would agree that characteristics of *righteousness* are necessary to the dispatch of good civil government, but how you produce such individuals to lead in the state is more difficult than the simple analysis of the need. The only way to produce these virtues in leaders is through the evangelism and discipleship efforts of believers in the lives of other individuals. As the discipleship, priorities, responsibilities, and manifestations of the Church go, so goes the state. Put another way, the state reflects the collective *righteousness* of its people, much more than it causes such *righteousness*. Put still another way, the heralders of God's truth are critically important to the success of the public servant and the future of the nation; the expositor and instructor of God's precepts is the seminal incubator of a country's present and future culture. In Hosea 4:6, God said to His Bible teachers of the time:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from

being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

This Old Testament passage serves to reveal the God-intended relationship between the Church and the state today. For the Church to fail to teach God's precepts to the leaders of the state is a sore subject in the eyes of God. It is incumbent on the Church to teach God's precepts and manufacture *righteous* leaders in and for the state. The state itself is dependent on the Church to do this for her.

The insight and emphasis of Proverbs regarding the health of a state clearly reveals the need for the continual development of *righteous* leadership. Definitively, a Solomonic spectral analysis of *righteousness* reveals at least five beautiful colors: calling, *justice*, discernment, conviction, and prayerfulness. To what degree do each of these wonderful virtues shine forth in and from your life? Does your life reveal these characteristics? To the degree it does, you are adding to the *exaltation of our nation*.

1. Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Proverbs*, New York/Pittsburgh: R. Carter, 1847, 130, (<https://biblicale-learning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Bridges-Proverbs.pdf>).

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