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## **Mind Games Survival Course Manual**



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# **A Christian View of Politics, Government, and Social Action**

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## **VII. Biblical guidelines for social action**

How then should Christians be involved in the social and political arena? They should be distinctively Christian in their approach, and they should learn from the mistakes of other Christians in the past so that they might be effective without falling into compromise or sin.

### **A. *First, Christians must remember that they have a dual citizenship.***

On the one hand, their citizenship is in heaven and not on earth (Philippians 3:17-21). Christians must remind themselves that God is sovereign over human affairs even when circumstances look dark and discouraging.

On the other hand, the Bible also teaches that Christians are also citizens of this earth (Matthew 22:15-22). We are to obey government (Romans 13:1-7) and work within the social and political circumstances to affect change. Christians are to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-4) and obey those in authority.

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to leaven which was hidden in three pecks of meal (Matthew 13:33). The meal represents the world and the leaven represents the Christian presence in it. We are to exercise our influence within the mass of society and bring about change. Though the Christian presence may seem as insignificant as leaven in meal, nevertheless we are to bring about the same profound change.

### **2. *Second, Christians must remember the sovereignty of God.***

The Bible teaches that God is sovereign over nations. He bestows power upon whom He wishes (Daniel 4:17), and He can turn the heart of a king wherever He wishes (Proverbs 21:1).

Christians have often been guilty of believing that they alone can make a difference in the political process. Christian leaders frequently claim the future of this country is dependent upon the election of a particular candidate, the passage of a particular bill, or the confirmation of a particular Supreme Court justice. While it is important for Christians to be involved in social and political affairs, they must not forget that God is ultimately in control.

**3. *Third, Christians must use their specific gifts within the social and political arenas.***

There are different gifts and different ministries (1 Cor. 12:4-6) to which each Christian has been called. Some may be called to a higher level of political participation than others (e.g., candidate for school board, Congressman). All have a responsibility to be involved in society, but some are called to a higher level of social service (e.g., social worker, crisis pregnancy center worker). Christians must recognize the diversity of gifts and encourage fellow believers to use their individual gifts for the greatest impact.

**4. *Finally, Christians must channel their social and political activity through the church.***

Christians need to be accountable to one another, especially as they are seeking to make an impact on society. Wise leadership can prevent zealous evangelical Christians from repeating mistakes made in previous decades by other Christians.

The local church should also provide a context for compassionate social service. In the New Testament, the local church became a training ground for social action (Acts 2:45, 4:34). Meeting the needs of the poor, the infirm, the elderly, the widows is a responsibility of the church. Ministries to these groups can provide a foundation and a catalyst for further outreach and ministry to the community at large.

Christians have a responsibility to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). In our needy society, we have abundant opportunities to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet significant social needs. By combining these two areas of preaching and ministry, Christians can make a strategic difference in society.



## Notes

1. Hugh Revor-Roper, "Human nature and politics," *Listener*, Dec. 10, 1953.
2. Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Challenge of Marxism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980).
3. James Madison, *Federalist Papers*, #51 (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 322.
4. Madison, *Federalist Papers* #55, p. 346.

5. This is portion of a statement I use when speaking on college campuses on American Political Theory.
6. Statement by Joseph Story in his 1829 inaugural address as Dane Professor at Harvard. Quoted in Perry Miller, ed. *The Legal Mind in America* (NY: Doubleday, 1962), p. 178.
7. Full discussion of this idea can be found in books by Francis Schaeffer (*How Should We Then Live?* and *Christian Manifesto*) and John Whitehead (*The Second American Revolution*).

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