**What the Bible says about Government Leaders and Citizens**

Ancient governments dealt with issues most nations do not have today (kings, slow communications, no police, etc.). Modern governments have many new issues unknown back then (global economy and free trade, patent law, stocks and bonds, etc.). However, looking through scriptures one can see common values and God's intent for godly government. While this might not be all Scripture say, here are 55 principles we can glean from Scripture.

**Attitude**

The Lord can direct the king's heart as He pleases (Proverbs 21:1) and God's plans prevail (Proverbs 19:21).

Know that a crown (or political office) is never secure (Proverbs 27:24).

Those who seek the Lord fully understand justice (Proverbs 28:5) and justice gives stability (Proverbs 29:4).

Government should value its people (Proverbs 14:28).

A ruler is not always necessary for things to get done. Consider the ants and the locust (Proverbs 6:6-8; 30:27).

Know that a government is established through righteousness (Proverbs 16:10,12).

Leaders, like everyone else, should not be proud (Proverbs 3:5-6; 11:2; 13:10; 21:24; 30:29-31).

Do not be wise in your own eyes (Proverbs 3:7; 12:15; 26:12,16; 28:11).

Women can ruin a ruler (Proverbs 31:3) as can alcohol (Proverbs 31:4).

**A Ruler Should Not**

Do not be a tyrant (Proverbs 28:15-16) or unjust (Proverbs 17:10). Do not deprive people of their rights (Proverbs 31:5).

Do not accept bribes (2 Chronicles 19:7; Psalm 15:5; Proverbs 15:27; 17:23; 28:16; 29:4; Isaiah 1:23; 5:13; 1 Samuel 4:3-4; 5:13; 12:3; Exodus 23:8; Ecclesiastes 7:7; Deuteronomy 16:19; Amos 5:12). Do not drink alcohol while governing (Proverbs 31:4-5).

Do not praise the wicked, but rather resist them (Proverbs 17:12; 28:4).

Do not listen to lies (Proverbs 29:12). Rulers should value people who speak the truth (Proverbs 16:3; 17:7,13).

Caution is OK, but do not be swayed by the fear of others (Proverbs 29:25).

Do not steal, rather defend orphans and widows (Isaiah 1:23).

Do not give food to those who refuse to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10; Proverbs 16:26).

Do not hoard food when people need it (Proverbs 11:26).

Do not oppress the poor (Proverbs 28:3; 22:16). Do not let interest rates get so exorbitant that it is unkind to the poor (Proverbs 28:8).

**A Ruler Should**

Rulers should get rid of all the evil they see (Proverbs 20:8,26), Remove the wicked from their presence (Proverbs 25:4-5), and punish false witnesses (Proverbs 19:5).

Government has a duty to maintain order (Proverbs 28:2).

The government has the right to bear the sword against wrongdoers (Romans 13:4) and against external aggressors (Deuteronomy 20:1; Judges 3, 4, etc.). It is OK to train for war (Psalms 144:1; 149:6-8).

For waging war have many advisers (Proverbs 20:18; 24:6; ~12:15).

Women leaders, such as Deborah, can be pleasing to God (Judges 4:4-10;5:1). They can be evil tyrants too, like Athaliah (2 Kings 11:1; 2 Chronicles 22:10-12).

The rulers under you should be righteous and people of integrity (Proverbs 29:2; Nehemiah 7:2).

Have skilled people working for you (Proverbs 22:29), not foolish advisors (1 Kings 12:6-14), and do not have lazy messengers and officials (Proverbs 10:26).

Speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves, and defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 30:8-9).

Protect and care about their people (Exodus 32:11,13; 2 Chronicles 1:10-12 vs. 1 Kings 12:14). A judge should care about justice for all (Deuteronomy 24:17-18; Proverbs 29:14).

Ideally have people be reluctant to do him or his people wrong (Proverbs 19:12; 20:2).

**Laws**

Justice (and human laws) should be based on God's standard, not man's (Proverbs 29:26). Make wise laws, do not just make expedient or sloppy laws (Proverbs 8:15).

Someone who does wrong, such as stealing, should pay it back plus 1/5 to double extra (Exodus 22:7-9; Numbers 5:5-8).

Do not let the punishment exceed the crime, such as execution poking out an eye or knocking out a tooth. (Deuteronomy 19:21; Leviticus 24:20; Exodus 21:22-24)

Laws should distinguish between intentional and unintentional wrongs (Numbers 35:18-28; Exodus 21:12-14).

Do not punish parents for kids' sins or vice versa (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:13-14;17-20).

Having laws to execute people for murder, is fine (Romans 14).

Having laws requiring payment of taxes is fine (Matthew 17:24-27).

It is fine to own personal property (Luke 15:8; 2 Timothy 4:12), even great wealth (1 Timothy 6:17-18) and inherit from our parents (Proverbs 13:22; 17:2; 19:14; Psalm 17:14; Ecclesiastes 2:21, Luke 15:12,31; Numbers 32:7) is fine.

Women can inherit just as men (Numbers 32:2,8).

**The Courts**

Do not testify against someone without cause (Proverbs 24:28).

If a malicious witness lies to try to harm an innocent person, do to the witness what he intended be done to the defendant (Deuteronomy 19:16-19; Proverbs 19:5).

Do not use the courts to take advantage of those with less money (Proverbs 22:22-23).

Do not call the guilty innocent or the innocent guilty (Proverbs 24:23-25; 17:15; Deuteronomy 25:1).

Do be quick to bring things to court (Proverbs 25:7-8). It is better to suffer wrong than to sin by suing other believers (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

Judge the poor and non-citizens fairly (Proverbs 29:14; Deuteronomy 24:17-18).

Do not mock at justice (Proverbs 19:28), do not hold court judges in contempt (Deuteronomy 17:12).

Working as a lawyer is OK (Titus 3:13). Do not bear false witness (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20).

Do not betray a friend's confidence (Proverbs 25:9-10).

**Duties of a Citizen**

We should pray for government leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

We should honor government leaders (Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17). We should not speak evil of the ruler of our people (Acts 23:2-5; Exodus 22:28).

It is OK to serve in a secular government, as Joseph, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Obadiah did (Genesis 41:41-44; Nehemiah 1:11; Daniel 6:4; 1 Kings 18:3-4,14).

We should submit to the government (Romans 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:13-16), and only disobey where it contradicts what God has taught in His Word. (Acts 4:19-20; Daniel 3:8-18). Even in disobeying an evil king, one should still honor the king (Daniel 6:4-21).

Hiding from evil government authorities is OK (Proverbs 27:12; Amos 5:13; 1 Kings 17:2-10; 18:4,9-14; 1 Samuel 19:11-12).

Do not be rebellious against the government (Proverbs 17:11; 28:2; Isaiah 1:23; Jeremiah 42:10-11) without proper cause (2 Kings 9; 1 Kings 11:29-40).

Pay your taxes; it is proper for a government to collect them (Matthew 22:17; Romans 13:7).

Do not exalt yourself before a ruler (Proverbs 25:6,27).

Do not be gluttonous or greedy before a ruler (Proverbs 23:1-3).

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