

7 Universal Principles of Civil Government

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1. Origin and Need for Civil Government: When God created mankind, He made them good (Genesis 1:26-27, 31). After the Fall (Genesis 3), the need for civil government arose because of our sinful nature. Rev. Samuel West (1776) explained: “The necessity of forming ourselves into politic bodies, and granting to our rulers a power to enact laws for the public safety, and to enforce them by proper penalties, arises from our being in a fallen and degenerate state . . . civil government is absolutely necessary for the peace and safety of mankind.”

2. First Purpose of Civil Government: After judgment by the global flood (Genesis 6–8), the LORD God did a most gracious and benevolent act: He delegated some of His authority to mankind to punish evil and render justice (Genesis 9:5-6)—that is, to establish civil governments and the rule of law for this purpose. Therefore, ***the first purpose of civil government is to exercise lawful authority that is delegated by God.***

3. Legitimacy of Civil Government is Inseparable from Duty to Protect Human Life: From the moment of the divine authorization for human civil government, that grant of authority was inseparable from the duty to protect innocent human life: “Whoever sheds mans blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:5-6). The commandments of God further state: “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:17). From its original authorization, ***the legitimacy of civil government was inseparably linked to its duty to protect innocent human life and establish lawful justice.*** Each government should create and enforce laws protecting human life from conception or fertilization to natural death.

4. Authority for Civil Government Comes through the People: To protect their lives, liberties, and property, God has given people the right to form a civil government, including by electing those who will be entrusted with that authority. *Scriptures:* Exodus 18:13-26; Numbers 1:1-16; Deuteronomy 1:13-17; 16:16-20; 1 Samuel 2:4; 5:1-4; 1 Kings 12:1-20.

5. Civil Government is to Establish the Rule of Law and Justice: Those entrusted with civil authority are responsible to establish just laws, enforce the rule of law, and ensure justice when someone is harmed because the law is violated. *Scriptures:* Exodus 20:1-17; Numbers 15:16; Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 16:18-20; 24:17; 1 Samuel 8:15; 1 Kings 3:5-28; Proverbs 20:8; 21:3, 15.

6. Lawful Authority to Encourage Good and Punish Evil: Those in civil government—legislative, executive, judicial, police, military—have a solemn duty to ensure that the laws and policies they make or enforce consistently encourage good or punish evil. When they do, they function as a “minister of God.” When they do not, they do not represent God (Romans 13:1-7).

7. Prohibiting Abortion is a Right Use of Civil Authority. Prohibiting abortion is the right use of civil authority as “a minister of God” to encourage what is good and be “an avenger” against “the one who practices evil” (Romans 13:1-4). Doing so restrains people from doing evil, and does not violate any legitimate right. Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan said, “We have the duty to protect the life of an unborn child.” He also said, “Make no mistake, abortion-on-demand is not a right granted by the Constitution.” *Scriptures:* Exodus 20:13; 21:22-23; Leviticus 18:20-30; 20:1-5; 24:17; Deuteronomy 5:17; Matthew 19:18; Romans 13:9.

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