

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 166 | Politics, Part 2: The Purpose Of Government

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



**Autumn:** Welcome to the Vision for Life podcast, an ongoing conversation between the pastors of Fellowship Denver and the church at large. Each week we talk about life, faith, the Bible, and how to follow Jesus as we go about our daily lives. I'm Autumn, the host of the podcast and Hunter is here with me today, and Jesse. Hello to you both. Hunter is the one on microphone. Hunter, good to be here with you.

**Hunter:** It's great to be here. We are recording this on Spring Blizzard 2024 morning. Our Denver listeners will probably know what that's referring to. But the reason I'm mentioning that is everyone is just a little out of sorts. You just threw on a beanie and barely made it in today. Your house is all home and in their underwear and-

**Autumn:** That was Jesse's household.

**Hunter:** That was Jesse's household.

**Autumn:** My kids are in their pajamas for sure.

**Hunter:** Well, I'm just prepping our listeners that I'm probably the only person that's really sharp today, and everyone else is struggling. So, this could be a rambling conversation.

**Autumn:** Yep, you're right, Hunter. We're feeling a little sluggish. And this is part two of a conversation that we began last week. We're going to discuss politics for a few weeks here. And this was something that you brought up we should discuss this year. It's on everyone's minds. We're in an election year. It's relevant in our context in Denver, but also the whole of our country right now. And I was a little reticent, and you told me that maybe my perspective on politics is a bit too small. And then you mentioned that last week too, on our first podcast episode where we talked about the purpose of politics. And you said, well, Autumn, maybe your politics are too small. So, what do you mean by that?

**Hunter:** I love talking about politics, but not just in the sense of what's going on in the political debates of our country. Although I'd keep up with those. But I actually think it's really important to, as part of our discipleship to Jesus, to learn how to think politically and to develop a political theology. And what I meant by your politics is too small is most of us get caught up in the debates that are happening right now or in an election year. And we think about who's running against who and what are our choices. And we think about the hot button issues, which is important. But we often don't step back and ask, where do politics come from and what's its purpose? And that's what I mean when I say a theology of politics. And last week, I made the point that God created politics; as soon as He envisioned a man and a woman, you have politics. And anyone who's married will tell you there's politics. And that's why I'm not married. I just have a little slice of my life, which is non-political.

**Autumn:** Okay. Alright. Well, we're just going to skip past that virgin thing.

**Hunter:** Anyway, keep going. But God made politics when He created a man and a woman. And when He told it to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, there was going to be a human society. These people were going to have to work together in order to fulfill the mandate of bringing God's glory to earth as He envisioned. And so, God's project of making the world a place that displays His glory, that is a political project. And this is why politics, all political matters, feel so important to us because God made them to be important. And I actually think we have to step back and ask, what is the purpose of politics? Why did God make it? How has the fall impacted politics? What does a redeemed politics look like? The Church is a political project. It is literally a community of redeemed people learning how to live

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together, love each other, and display what the Kingdom of God is like, and to live on God's mission to the world. That's a political project. So, these questions are important. And I think that when we consider those bigger theological questions of politics, it helps us to make sense out of and to navigate some of the particular political debates that happen in our world.

**Autumn:** Thanks, Hunter, for bringing us up to speed and for reminding me and our listeners of this macro purpose for politics, what you call the theology of politics. I am so glad that we started there, our conversations there to help us remember that any interpersonal relationship, and then as those concentric circles go out, so you mentioned a marriage relationship, then we add more people to our families. We experience this in work, we experience this in a school context, a church context, really anywhere that we interact with other people and have to find ways to cooperate and do things together there, politics exists. So, it is a really helpful reminder that not only does politics exist because it was made by God, but that it's purposeful. You had taught a class a few years ago-

**Hunter:** It was back during peak COVID. It was during the fall of 2020, which I think we had an election that year. And as I taught the people, I felt the need to develop this theology of politics. And so, we taught an online class, and hundreds of people came.

**Autumn:** And we will link to those episodes, the audio from those classes that you led during COVID in the previous election year. In those classes, you identified four particular types of politics, or realms in which politics take place. And one of those realms was public square politics. And you said, really, what I just explained, anywhere that people exist together and have to cooperate and do things together, that's public square politics. And then you identified another type of politics, or realm in which politics takes place. And that's governmental politics. And that's what we're focusing on today. And we're taking a little bit different angle, but talking specifically about the purpose of government.

**Hunter:** And governmental politics gets closer to what most people think of when they think of politics. Because most of what we call politics is about people competing and debating over what the policies of government are going to be and who is going to be in elected governmental positions. So, we're getting a little closer now. We zoomed out and we did a theology of politics. And maybe that felt helpful. Maybe that felt ethereal. Today, we're going to get a little closer to where we actually live. And we're going to ask, what is the purpose of government? We're going to do a theology of government, which might be a subspecies of a theology of politics. And we actually see government created by God and given purposes by God in Scripture. So, we're going to try to look at those, summarize them and ask, what is the government's big purpose or purposes? And when we know those, it really does help us to think better about the specific policy debates or electoral debates that we have today.

**Autumn:** Alright. Well, let's get into it. What is the first purpose that we identified? We're going to talk about three specifically. As you're listening, you may think of others, but we've kind of tried to encapsulate these in three big categories that capture God's design and intent for government and the purpose of government. So, what is the first of these three that we've identified?

**Hunter:** We are particularly going to develop a theology of government for a fallen world. And if we go back to right after, shortly after the fall in Genesis chapter nine, this is after the flood with Noah, God is essentially recreating the world starting with this remnant that's been saved through the flood, Noah and his family. And in Genesis chapter 9, the beginning of Genesis 9, God blesses Noah, blesses his sons, He gives them the cultural mandate again. He says to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

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And He wants them to continue this political project that started before the fall. He adds in verse five, though, this line, He says, "And for your lifeblood, I will require a reckoning from every beast, I will require it and from man, from His fellow man, I will require a reckoning for the life of man, whoever sheds the blood of man by man, His blood shall be shed for God made man in His own image." And then He repeats the cultural mandate, and you be fruitful, multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it. What we see here is that after the flood, and we know this is a world because pre before the flood, this was a world of violence. This was a world where murder was being committed regularly. And God knows this is still a fallen world that Noah and his family are going to be fruitful and multiply. And so, God ordains here a principle of justice that then gets applied to government that whoever sheds the blood of man by man, His blood will be shed. This is where we get the idea of a life for a life. And we see a principle of justice established. There's a reciprocity; the punishment should be commensurate with the crime, or it should reflect the crime. And so, if you take someone's life, then it would be just for government to take your life. He says, by man your blood shall be shed whoever sheds the blood of man by man, that is by the government of other men, His blood should also be shed. And so, there's a principle of justice and then God gives the reason why He says for God made man His own image. And you see here that there's a purpose of government to affirm the image of God and to protect the image of God. And so, you zoom back and you think God has endowed government with the responsibility of affirming His image in people and protecting the image in people. And in a fallen world, God wants His image in people to be honored and to be protected. And this is one of the purposes of government. So, we might summarize this as the first purpose of government is to render justice that affirms the image of God in man.

**Autumn:** As you were reading Genesis 9, Hunter, in explaining that the cultural mandate is repeated there and it states clearly in verse 6, for God made man in His own image, that calls to mind other language that is based on this conception of the human person, the value and dignity of each individual. And then the way that that impacts how government takes shape. So, as you were reading that, I think of the lines in the Declaration of Independence that are we hear them repeated often probably, but let's say, we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain and alienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And then it goes on to say that government is made to secure these rights.

**Hunter:** What is really significant about that statement of the Declaration of Independence is it ties these rights that we have not just to an agreement among ourselves, like we're going to agree to honor these rights among ourselves, like we have given each other these rights or that we have created these rights for ourselves, but rather it says we've looked to the Creator and these are the rights the Creator gives.

And this is a significant cultural achievement. All the writers of the Declaration of Independence were not Christians, but they did have a theistic worldview. And this was a significant cultural achievement to say that the political order in any society should reflect a created order and should reflect something that comes from our Creator, not just something that we've kind of come up with on our own, was a significant statement. And the Declaration of Independence is actually not legally binding, like the U.S. Constitution is, the Supreme Court, for example, doesn't interpret and apply the Declaration of Independence, but the Declaration of Independence gives us the framework of thought in which our founders were originally writing and founding our country. And the words you referenced have been very significant in the history of our country as we have thought about ways that we're not being just. Martin Luther King most notably in His I Have a Dream speech, appealed to those words and said America is being inconsistent with its founding creed because it is not granting to black Americans the rights that their Creator has given them. And He appealed not just to the goodwill among us and not even just to our own Constitution, but He appealed to God and said if we are going to be a just society living under

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God, then we have to give these rights to all people who are living in our society because these rights were given to them by God. It's very notable. That's significant today because as we've gotten further and further removed culturally from the founding era and as we become, as many will say, more secular, there are fewer people in our society that reference some created order above and beyond us.

And that is meaningful. We start to imagine that rights are things that we give ourselves or we start to imagine that rights are things that we can just agree among ourselves to honor and protect. And there's something very important in the Declaration of Independence that acknowledges that these rights come from God Himself.

**Autumn:** If I think about the paradigm that we introduced in our first conversation, creation, fall, redemption, and you picked up our conversation today saying these are the government in the way that we're talking about it and examining its purposes was instituted post-Fall, and post-flood even, in the passage that we read for a fallen world. And we talked about last week the way in which the church is a redeemed body politic and holds to certain values and displays what redeemed politics or is to not that it always does, but is intended to display to the world what a redeemed politics looks like. And so, I think this, the affirmation of the image of God in each person is something that within the church we must maintain. Like this is the foundation of a healthy body politic.

**Hunter:** And the Declaration of Independence is not a Christian document. We all realize that. And yet by acknowledging that the rights we have come from God, we as Christians can implicitly say that, and that's because we have rights that come from God because we're made in God's image. And so, there's a real sense in which the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights that came later is very consistent with a Christian worldview. So, we need to learn to see things that are not explicitly Christian but are consistent with and compatible with a Christian worldview. And I would probably go a step further and say because of the history of Christianity, its influence in Western civilization, we would not have gotten to the place where we could all agree these rights are given to us by God without the historic influence of Christianity.

And so, these are consistent with a Christian worldview. And that even affects how we navigate some of the political debates that happen today. For example, I can think of how many Christians—and this is true of both Protestants and Catholics. In fact, historically it was true of Catholics before it was true of Protestants—how many Christians have advocated for protection of the life of the unborn and have been particularly animated by our society trying to declare abortion as a right. And they're saying something important. They're saying that's not a right that was in our Constitution originally, and that's not a right that has been given to us by God. It's rather something we've come up with. And if we've come up with it and it's not been given to us by God, then we're trying to take God's place. And it doesn't protect the rights given by God to the unborn children. And so, it's making an argument very consistent to the—similar to the one that Martin Luther King made in the 60s to say, we need to live up to our founding ethos, which is consistent with what is true from God, which is all people are created by God and endowed by Him with certain inalienable rights, their made in His image. So, they see these debates about abortion—now, there're also debates about medically assisted death or medically assisted suicide—they see these debates as foundational to our political order, not meaning that they're the only justice issues that matter. There're many justice issues that are important. But something is foundational when literally everything else kind of rests on it. So, if you think of the foundation of your house, everything else rests on it, and a crack in the foundation is more significant than the dishwasher going out, because it's even more significant than a water leak. Because a crack in the foundation, if not dealt with, will eventually cause the whole house to fall. And I think many Christians have seen these political debates that are really about, who is a human being and do they have rights

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given to them by God, gets applied to abortion, gets applied to medically assisted suicide, these kinds of things. They see these debates as foundational justice issues because it indicates that there's a crack in our foundation when we're not protecting the rights of individuals that was given to them by God. In the same way that racial justice was a very fundamental category because they're really debating, are humans created in the image of God? And if they are created in the image of God, what's the implications of that for how we structure our government and what we do and don't allow and what rights we do and don't acknowledge and how we protect those rights? So, these are foundational debates, and this is why they're intense today.

**Autumn:** Yeah, anytime- so, it shows up in these foundational issues, but this is really relevant to so many questions of social justice that anytime we fail to recognize the image of God in a person and to recognize the inherent values that therefore that life has, we can give way to perspectives and create policies that cheapen the value of life. Okay, so first purpose of government, to render justice that affirms the image of God in every person. How about the second? What is the second purpose of government that we'll discuss today?

**Hunter:** Yeah, the second one, and I believe I took this, I don't have it in my notes here, but I do believe that I got this from Jonathan Leeman's excellent book, *How the Nations Rage*, which is a political theology book, and it's written at a level that I think many of our listeners could read and engage and get a lot from. And a second purpose of government, which is related to the first, but it's a little bit different, is to establish a platform for peace where order and flourishing can happen in a fallen world. And from our last episode, we know what peace means. Peace means *shalom*, biblically. Which is not just the cessation of hostility, but it's also all the parts of creation working together and like a fabric where everything's working together toward a common goal. And so, government, when they establish a platform for peace, which first means cessation of hostility and it includes order, that is like the platform where it creates the container in which people can work together to get things done, even in a fallen world.

**Autumn:** That sounds lovely. That sounds like the sort of world that I would love to inhabit. But does Scripture also point us towards how that is to happen? how we go about establishing an environment of peace in which we can cooperate and bring about order and create an environment in which people can flourish?

**Hunter:** I think you get a real hint of that in Romans chapter 13. Paul, this is Paul's pretty well-known exhortation that let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there's no authority from God except those that have been instituted by God. And Paul was writing that to the Romans, who lived under the rule of the Roman Empire, which was far from a perfectly just empire. And yet Paul sees purpose and that God has for even that empire. And He mentions punishing sin and punishing the wrongdoer. So, this is the preservation of order. He also mentions pay taxes to whom taxes are owed and taxes were used by the Roman government to provide what they call public works and public spaces. And Paul probably sees some benefit to those, that those public spaces and public works are creating a platform in which people can work together.

That sets us up for all kinds of debates, like what are public works that the government should and shouldn't do and is their value in government's public projects that they tax us for that sets up all kinds of debates about that. But the point is those debates, and that purpose of government, is sanctioned by God to create this platform of order and of peace so that we can work together in a fallen world.

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**Autumn:** How do we recognize on the one hand that God chooses to use governments, even unjust governmental bodies, to bring about or to maintain some sort of order that can allow people to do good work, to be involved in creating culture. So, how do we reckon that with the understanding that we are not simply to abide in justice?

**Hunter:** One way to understand it is that God holds governments accountable to His standards of justice, and He tells rulers in the Bible, I'm going to judge you based on when my Kingdom comes, you're going to be judged based on how well you've governed. So, there's a little bit of a future dimension to it, but it also gives us a platform for today evaluating is this government just or not just? And I would just add even among some of the most unjust governments that have existed in history, there's still a sense in which there's an order that is maintained by them even though they are fundamentally unjust. We've seen examples of that in the modern world.

Think about what happened when we overthrew a level of disorder in that society that many in the aftermath are arguing maybe it wasn't good, fundamentally good to destabilize that society, even though Saddam was an unjust ruler and even though there was all kinds of gross injustice that happened, there was a holding of order by really just keeping all these factions in check with a strong arm that he maintained. And so, these are debates that happen politically. It's sometimes between ideals, between what is ideal and what is real. And there's a term even for the realist perspective, real politic is the term for the realist perspective and the realist, the real politic perspective, and I'm not arguing for it here, but the real politic perspective will say, yeah, sometimes you've just got to do what works in a fallen world and not aim for what would be ideal. Where the idealist perspective would say, no, we have to advocate for what is most just and what's most ideal. And so, these things get debated and they drive a lot of the policy debates that happen in our world.

**Autumn:** It makes me think of also, Hunter, the pattern in Scripture that reveals that the nature of God's Kingdom so often is subversive and it's through the people who He puts in particular places, but this holds true in the story of Daniel who existed in Babylon. So, in a very unjust governmental system, but He continued faithfully praying to God, living according to the values of the God had provided for Israel, maintaining God's laws even in that place. And then obviously that had a particular results, but this pattern holds true in Daniel, Nehemiah, even in the person of Jesus who came while Rome was ruling Jerusalem and ruling over the land of Israel. And He both taught and went about ministry in a way that revealed that the kingdom of God that He was bringing about wasn't going to challenge the political powers in the way that the people wanted it to. It was going to be subversive in nature, but because of that subversive nature, the gospel can enter any culture and take root and spring up like a seed like Jesus taught and can act like yeast that spreads through bread. And so, it's intentional also. And then we see that reflected in the way that Paul is talking in Romans 13 that there might be a government that is unjust.

It still is maintaining this level of order in society and then God's Kingdom can grow within that culture and even within any governmental system, whether we say it's just or unjust.

**Hunter:** I'm so glad you're bringing that up, and it's actually bringing two things to mind. And as you were talking, I'm like, I can't decide which of these I should say. So, maybe I'll say on both. The first thing that brings to mind is there's a strong theme in Scripture that God is sovereign in the allowing and removing of governmental authorities. This is a big theme in the book of Daniel. God reminds the rulers He sets up kings and He removes kings. He sets up kingdoms, He removes kingdoms. This happens through Jesus too. Jesus is able to do His ministry knowing that God is going to set up and God is going to tear down the powers according to His will. He prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem. He prophesied that the ruling powers of Jerusalem are going to be sovereignly taken out by God.



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And that did happen in history. You can also see that He trusts His father with what to do with the Roman authorities. And so, it's important for us as Christians to have a leaning into the sovereignty of God when we see unjust government and to think God is going to allow that as long as He wants to for His mysterious purposes. And whenever we talk about God's sovereignty, there's always 10 gazillion purposes of God that we don't see or understand. And it's always we just say mysterious, His mysterious purposes. And He's going to tear it down when He's ready to tear to tear it down. And He's the ultimate authority. We could think that way right now about Vladimir Putin. One day, God is going to remove Him. It's going to be done. And this is the old Johnny Cash song, you know, sooner or later, he's gonna, God's gonna, hunt you down, he's saying—what was that song called? Someone helped me out here. Jesse, what's that Johnny Cash song? Oh, the song's called literally "God's Gonna Cut You Down." And Johnny Cash saying it toward the end of His life.

Go Google it, look it up. It's haunting and powerful. And it's a biblically prophetic message to all rulers of the earth.

Okay, that's the first thing that came to mind when you were saying we're saying what you were saying. The second thing that came to mind is you're bringing us back to the importance of one of the foundational political principles we discussed on the last episode, which is the Church is a redeemed politic. And no matter what earthly politic the Church lives under, no matter what government they live under, the Church is to be in its life a people whose political life is shaped by God and by His word. And we can be sure, and we can know that even when it's hard to know how should we relate to the governing authorities and what should be our thoughts about this or that political debate or this or that political tension in our society. And we can debate that the thing that is crystal clear in Scripture is that the church is always to be a people who demonstrate the kingdom of God politics in the way they relate to each other and the way they govern their life and their beliefs. We know that crystal clear and that's consistent throughout both Old and New Testaments.

**Autumn:** Alright, so we have covered the first purpose of government is to render justice that affirms the image of God in man. The second is to establish a platform for peace, order, and flourishing in a fallen world. And then the third purpose of government that we'll discuss today is to create the context for gospel advancement.

**Hunter:** And you really see this one come out in the New Testament, and I'm thinking here in particular of how Paul instructs Timothy to teach the Church to pray in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy chapter 2.

Paul says:

*I urge that supplications, prayers and intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good and it's pleasing in the sight of God, our savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and there's one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

And that little phrase at the proper time, Paul is saying, we live in a time in history when God is letting that message be known. And so, He sees this era of history we're living in between the first and second comings of Christ as the proper time. And that is a time when this gospel that God has created a way, God has made a way for men to be reconciled to Him and God is reconciling men to Him. This is a time for that gospel to go out. And then Paul connects that to praying for kings and those in high authority. And you can get inside His head and see what He's thinking to the extent that those kings and those people in high authority maintain peace and order and justice in this fallen world. I can do my work as an

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apostle, as a gospel preacher. I can do my work unimpeded. That's what He means when He means live a peaceful and quiet life. That's not quietism. That's not, I'm just going to hunker down and live my little life because Paul's not quiet at all. He's trying to tell as many people as He can about Christ. And it has massive public disruptive implications everywhere He goes. So, this is not quietism, but it is an acknowledgement that when government does its job fairly competently, we can just get on with the work of gospel ministry. And that seems to be a purpose for which God has ordained government.

So, now we step back. He wants to maintain the image of God and he wants us to honor the image of God. That was the first principle, and he wants to create, he wants us to have peace and justice and main in a fallen world. He wants there to be a modicum of peace and justice, not perfect, but something in a fallen world. And then we come to this last purpose and all of that sets up a platform where His gospel can go forward. That's what he did in the first century, by the way, the Romans, the Romans didn't know they were doing this, but they built the roads that Paul could travel on and that the apostles could travel on and that the gospel could flourish in. They built the society, they knit the world together in the *Pax Romana*, the Roman peace. They knit the world together in a way that just allowed the gospel to go forward more quickly.

**Autumn:** Another way we could say this is this third purpose isn't one that the government may, it's not one in the way Paul is talking about, that the government is carrying out directly. It's like a benefit of the government maintaining political peace.

**Hunter:** That's a great distinction. And the first two purposes are ones that government is responsible for. And the third one is the benefit that comes from that, but it is a purpose for which God keeps government in place. And so, I'm glad you brought that out because it's not government's job to advance the gospel. It's our job to advance the gospel, but this platform they create of peace and flourishing enables us to do that, which is why we should pray for all who are in positions of authority so that the gospel can go forward.

**Autumn:** It is easy to forget that. It's easy to forget that Scripture actually teaches us that that is a good practice to engage in. And that, I think, reminds me of some another area in which maybe my politics are too small.

**Hunter:** Well, I had a lot of conversations with folks in the last few years about how the American political environment affects gospel preaching and whether it's beneficial to gospel preaching or not beneficial to gospel preaching, whether it makes it easier or harder. And the point I'm making is we need to factor in, does this just allow the Church to get on with its work? We need to factor that in to our to our political thinking because it seems to me that God is pleased when we can live peaceful, quiet lives because there's a relative sense of order in our world, so not so we can just have nice little peaceful, quiet lives where our kids are at home in their underwear while we make soup, but so we could get on with the work of gospel ministry.

**Autumn:** There's a final element of this conversation about governmental politics that I think is important for us to touch on. It's not one of the purposes of government, but it does impact how we understand this theology of politics and then governmental politics. And that's where government gets its authority.

**Hunter:** Yeah, I'm glad you're bringing that up too. We've hinted at it several times here, which is government gets its authority from God, and Psalm 2 is an excellent example of rulers being needing to be reminded of that they are temporary, that the Kingdom of God is eternal, that the Christ, the government of the Christ is eternal, and God is going



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to set up a kingdom that never ends, and that's the ultimate Kingdom. And all who have exercised authority in between the first and second coming to Christ are really before the setting up of that Kingdom, all who have exercised authority in the following world are going to be held accountable and give an account to God for how they've used that authority, and they have to be frequently reminded of that. And then there's also this acknowledgement in the Bible that they don't always use their power and authority that way, and sometimes that affects the church. Revelation is really this. Revelation is written to a church that is living under a government that has started to think of itself in Godlike terms.

And this is the common temptation of all human rulers and all governments is to think of themselves as the ultimate or the highest authority. This was Nebuchadnezzar's temptation that Daniel had to speak to him about. Nebuchadnezzar's temptation was to look at his vast kingdom and go look at all that I have done. And Daniel's main message to him was, there's a ruler over you. You are a subordinate authority. That's the message of Psalm chapter 2. That's the message of Revelation. And even when the government does not see that it's subordinate to the rule and authority of God, it's the Church's job to, number one, live supremely under the rule and authority of God. And number two, to remind the governing powers that they are subject to the rule and the authority of God. And if they don't want to be subject to the rule and authority of God, the Church does have to say, well, we're going to worship God regardless of the consequences of that.

**Autumn:** I love that reference. We've mentioned Daniel a couple of times, but it brings this vivid picture to mind because Nebuchadnezzar as the ruler and then the nation of Babylon become this kind of type throughout the rest of the biblical story. Babylon represents a political power that has forgotten that its authority is from God. And it assumes itself as the ultimate power. And sometimes people like Nebuchadnezzar then put themselves in the place of God, but Babylon acts as this type throughout the rest of Scripture for that kind of government. And then Daniel confronts Nebuchadnezzar, and you're saying it's the rightful role sometimes of the people of God, then to remind government when they see it behaving in this way, forgetting where it derives its authority to remind it, that it's not its own ultimate self-generating authority. What's a way that we see that this dynamic present in our current context?

**Hunter:** As American society has become more and more secular—meaning we don't always acknowledge the existence of God or that we're under God, and so, a lot of the understanding of government that was even present back at our founding doesn't seem to be as present in our current government—we find ourselves more and more in the position of having to say, hey, there's a law above you, and there's a law that God wove into His world, and there's a governor above you, and we're accountable to Him, not just to you. And so, this touches any number of hot button issues, so to speak, in our world. We've already talked about abortion on this show. This was part of Martin Luther King Jr.'s message about racial justice. He is saying there's a God who is above this society, and even if these governing powers here don't acknowledge these rights and treat us as human beings, there is a God who will hold you accountable to that. And so, He's speaking from that worldview. I think this applies to a lot of the debates that are happening about gender and sexuality in our culture today. We are in a place of having to remind our government that even if you have laws that permit certain things, God's going to hold us accountable for that, and we can't go along with that as your people. I often have this debate with people about the question of same-sex marriage; it's legal in our society, and realistically it's probably going to be— I don't see a lot of political energy in our society to go back on that, but the Church has to practice a different politics, and so we call marriage what God calls marriage, and some people will want to ask me, well, if it's okay in society, why can't we go along with that as a Church? And the reason is because we are under a different authority, and when the laws of God and the laws of man are in conflict, we follow the laws of God, and that's part of our discipleship is learning to do that in all areas of life.

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 166 | Politics, Part 2: The Purpose Of Government

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont

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So, that's just one example among many in our culture today, but I find more and more Christians are having to step back and go, what is the law of God say about this, and what does it mean that we worship Him and that we're accountable to Him? and we're going to have to go with that. And our witness, quote, to the government is sometimes direct witness, like saying, hey, that's wrong, that's unjust, and sometimes our witness is what is classically just called civil disobedience. It is saying we're going to live under the law of God, and we're going to follow Him, and then if there's consequences for that, well, we'll let you exercise those consequences on us because God will render His ultimate verdict one day. And so, this is where even the Christian civil disobedience tradition comes from and practicing a different form of marriage according to God's law, for example, is an act right now of civil disobedience. The government's not punishing us for that, but it is an act of civil disobedience in that we are saying by doing that there's a law above us that is higher than the U.S. Constitution.

**Autumn:** Well, Hunter, thanks for having this conversation with me today. To those of you listening, we love hearing from you, and we want to hear what questions you have about this political season, about politics in one of the ways we've discussed it, so theology of politics, the role of government. So, send us your questions. You can send all of that anytime to podcast at [fellowshipdenver.org](http://fellowshipdenver.org). Thanks for joining us on the Vision for Life podcast. Special thanks to Adam Anglin for our theme music, to Jesse Cowan, our producer, and to Judd Connell, who provides transcription for these episodes.