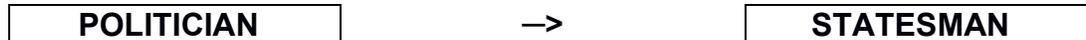


## Do We Need God to Be a Statesman?

Can we be a Statesman without depending upon God? I believe that potentially we can. However, I believe that it is absolutely necessary for us to have the values, character qualities that we as humans can best receive by depending upon God for these qualities.

**How do we move from one kind of leader to the other?**



**Do we need the help of God?**

**Statesmen supported by their faith in God.** I am not saying that every acknowledged Statesman lived his life in dependence upon God. However, I am firmly convinced that the one who desires to become a Statesman can best achieve that goal by living in dependence upon God and in obedience to Him. Nineteenth Century United Kingdom political figure William Gladstone, who served as Prime Minister on four different occasions, shared with us his insights:

*During the many years in the Cabinet I was brought in contact with some sixty master minds, and not more than perhaps three or four of whom were in sympathy with the skeptical movements of the day.*

His observation was that, although it may seem fashionable to express independence from God, the outstanding public servants were men of faith in God.

An interesting case study is William Wilberforce. As he looked back on his career and motivation, he said: “The first years I was in Parliament, I did nothing — nothing that is to any purpose. My own distinction was my darling object.” These are the words of a Politician. He summarized his changed direction with these words: “God Almighty has set before me two great objects — the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.” This is the Statesman speaking!

Let us consider two examples of God working in the hearts of public officials to make them better shepherds. Both governed as President of their nation two times with an interruption of years in between. In each case, the first period of governing was without God and the second was with God. The late **Mathieu Kérékou** governed Benin from 1972 to 1991 as a Marxist. With the close of the Cold War and the opening up of his country to free elections, he was soundly defeated in the first election and removed from office. In the process, God began to work in his life. He then withdrew from the public eye and focused his life on getting to know God. When the next elections were held in his country, he had so changed that he was elected by popular acclaim to head the nation again. One member of his cabinet told me that there was no comparison between the way he governed during this later period and the way he governed before. I am convinced that as a result of submitting his life to God as his shepherd, he became more of a shepherd himself. This man governed more compassionately as God became the ruler in his personal life.

**Olusegun Obasanjo** of Nigeria governed as Head of State during two periods, from 1976-79 as a military ruler and 1999-2007 as democratically-elected President. His earlier regime was reputed to be extremely corrupt. The second time, as President, his efforts to remove corruption from his country astounded friends and critics alike. What was the difference in his life between his two terms in office? Previous to his return to office, he was imprisoned on charges that were politically motivated. In the process, he submitted his life to God as his Lord. Subsequently, he said “Without Jesus, as President I can do nothing. With Him, all things.” It appears that God humbled him in order to remake him into God’s instrument in the nation. He described his years in prison as “God’s way of slowing me down to hear His message and His words.”

I am not in a position at this point to conclude that either of these leaders became a Statesman as we are defining. However, I am fully convinced that as they submitted their lives to God, they displayed more statesmanlike behavior using some of the measuring sticks. Furthermore, these two cases provide as close to a control study as possible for the role of faith in God in producing statesmanlike behavior. In both cases, we can compare the leadership of specific individuals without and with faith. Obviously, this does not rule out any other factors that may have changed as well. However, this provides us with a strong argument for faith and gives us much to reflect upon.

Thus, when we ask the question “Can we be a Statesman without the help of God?”, I am convinced the answer is “No.” We may not recognize and express our dependence upon God, but, in fact, we are. He has more at stake than we do in providing the leadership He intends for those He loves so much. Hence, I believe He will occasion supernaturally intervene to cause us to provide the proper leadership even when we are not inclined and in a way that goes against our normal behaviour. Once we recognize this, I believe we will realize we should acknowledge our need for Him and do everything we can to cooperate with Him.

*for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from Him, and we exist for Him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through Him, and we exist through Him. (1 Corinthians 8:6)*

*God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, Himself human, who gave Himself—a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time. (1 Timothy 2:3-6)*

*I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like Me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will. (Isaiah 46:9-10)*

*God is King of all the earth. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on His holy throne. The nobles of the peoples have assembled with the people of the God of Abraham. For the leaders of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted. (Psalm 47:7-9)*