

# The Statesman Embraces the Partnership with Civil Society

The person who first introduced me to the challenge of development 45 years ago was at the time a student from Bhutan. He described how the King would travel to a village to meet with the elders to discuss what projects were needed. Then, the King would provide the materials necessary for a project, but the villagers would provide the labor to complete the project. Improvement in the quality of life was a partnership — a shared responsibility.

This example illustrates elements of the partnership as our Creator intended for us. However, the partnership our Creator intended is even more intertwined than this example demonstrates. This contrasts with the attitude that the well-being of the people is Government's responsibility.

The people — the governed — bring resources that the Government lacks and which the combined effort needs to accomplish our Creator's goal of "a tranquil and quiet life in godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:2).

You will notice that each of the areas of involvement on the part of the governed, as listed below, requires personal obedience to God. It is God's plan and requires His direction.

## 1. Obedience to Government.

*Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor as the supreme authority or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good (1 Peter 2:13-15).*

If every member of our society would submit to the laws of our society, this would certainly contribute to the quality of life of our society. Furthermore, a significant portion of the budget for policing could be re-directed to more constructive programs. In addition, taxes would be paid, strengthening the public treasury.

## 2. Praying for wise decisions.

Government decision-makers, are first and foremost, human beings. As much as they may try, their thinking is not automatically the same as God's:

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways." This is the LORD's declaration. "For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).*

Thus, the instruction to believers in society is to ask God to impart His wisdom in decision-making:

*First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made in behalf of all people, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity (1 Timothy 2:1-2).*

## 3. Overcoming the spiritual battle in bringing blessing to the nation.

God makes clear that there is a spiritual battle over the nation:

*For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens (Ephesians 6:12).*

The work of the devil is real and disruptive of our efforts for good. God speaking:

*If ... My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:13-14).*

The prayers of “My people who are called by My name” who are willing to humble themselves before God can change the course of a nation, moving it from suffering to blessing as God adds His dimension to our efforts.

#### **4. Bringing harmony within the nation.**

Jesus described the second greatest commandment after loving God as:

*Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39).*

This includes admiring God’s handiwork in the creation of each individual and the desire to help that one to achieve the full potential for which God created them. With this attitude, many of the social issues that plague our communities would be eliminated.

#### **5. Speaks wisdom from God to Government.**

God instructs us:

*Speak truth to one another (Zechariah 8:16).*

God made it clear that the believers in society are:

*God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).*

The believers are to speak that truth from God to every segment of society including Government. They can also be expected to do this humbly and lovingly, recognizing that they are servants.

What our Creator intended was for governors to be granted authority to act on behalf of the people to meet needs they are unable to meet with their limited authority. Then, He intended for the governed to contribute their energy in supporting those efforts in partnership.

My encouragement for the Statesman is to recognize the value of the governed who fear God and to strengthen their role in the life of our nation. I view this group as the most important national treasure, which is what I believe they are intended to be. I believe we must recognize their intended role in strengthening our society. I am convinced we must recognize the invaluable role God intends for this resource to play in the life of our nation. Our encouraging them is in no way a conflict of the principle of “separation of Church and State”. Rather, it is a recognition of the role of our Creator in the well-being of our nation and a recognition of the partnership He intended between the governors and the governed.