**The Great Experiment**

**American History and Religion:**

God established Government: Romans 13:1: “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

For this section, we’re going to cover three main points. First, Christians should be involved in government. Second, this nation was founded on Biblical principles. Third, the phrase “Separation of Church and State,” is terribly misunderstood – and Christians should know how to address it.

Do we agree – Christians should be involved in government? I hope so, many don’t. They think that you check your faith at the door of politics, but that goes against everything that we know about God’s expectation for us. Remember – it is government that protects our ability to live peacably and share His Word.

Pastor Adrian Rogers said, “It’s inconceivable that God would create government and then tell His people to stay out of it.” Let’s look at just a few verses:

* Hebrews 13:21: God’s people are prepared by Him for every good work (government included)
* 1 Corinthians 6:3: Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!
* 1 Timothy 2:1-2: Pray for those in authority so that we can live in peace, spending our time in Godly living.

Our nation is founded on Biblical Principles!

* Our Founding Fathers read the Bible, quoted the Bible and patterned our form of government on Biblical principles. Most of them were students of the great Christian philosophers. Our government was designed to be a Great Experiment to prove God’s Word:
* University of Houston study by Donald S. Lutz in 1984 3 found that more than one-third of all the direct quotes used by our Founding Fathers, in more than 15,000 writings, came directly from the Bible.
* The Preamble to the Constitution, which states the purpose of the Constitution, specifically lists five things that are all either designed to “punish evil” or to “praise good” (Romans 13:3-4). These two purposes of government come directly from Romans 13:3-4. (These five things are: establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, secure the blessings of liberty.)
* The idea for the three branches of government is referenced in Isaiah 33:22: For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king.
* The Sixth Amendment ensures that everyone accused of a criminal act has the right to counsel. Exodus 23:6: Do not deny justice to the poor.
* The First Amendment highlights the priority that the Founding Fathers gave to religious freedom. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…..”

**Separation of Church and State is Misunderstood**

The interpretation of the First Amendment has become a point of contention in our country. Many people and even courts have taken the first part, “…make no law respecting an establishment of religion,” and they have ignored the second part, “or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

The phrase, “A wall of separation between church and state,” is often cited more often than the First Amendment. This phrase does not appear in the US Constitution at all. It does not appear in the Bill of Rights and it does not appear in any of the transcripts covering the convention where the authors discussed the first amendment. This phrase does appear in a letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to a group of Baptists in Danbury Connecticut shortly after he was elected President of the United States. Jefferson used this phrase in a letter to respond to concerns about the potential for state-sponsored religion. He agreed with the group that there should be a wall of separation between church and state when it came to such things. Jefferson was not advancing the modern view that religion must be excluded from the public square. After all, he concludes his letter, written in his official capacity as President, with a brief prayer 4.

Jefferson believed that God, not government was the author and source of our rights and that the government was to be prevented from interfering with those rights – as he explained in the full letter.

In his book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson, wrote, “And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure if we have lost the only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the peoples that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath?”

**Just to recap – let’s look at a few of our Founding Father’s quotes.**

* John Adams – “It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue.”
* John Quincy Adams – “The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code; it contained many statute of universal application – laws essential to the existence of men in society, and most of which have been enacted by every nation which ever professed any code of laws.”
* Benjamin Franklin – “Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.”
* Thomas Jefferson – “The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of mankind.”
* Benjamin Rush – “The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and the life of all republican governments.”
* Noah Webster – “The most perfect maxims and examples for regulating your social conduct and domestic economy, as well as the best rules of morality and religion, are to be found in the Bible…. The moral principles and precepts found in the scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws.”
* George Washington – “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are the indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of duties of man and citizens.”