

# EDUCATING FOR GODLY POLICY

THE LAW OF GOD AND PUBLIC POLICY: PART 11



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A REVISION STUDY FROM  
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Educating for Godly Policy  
The Law of God and Public Policy: Part 11  
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Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Welcome to <i>Educating for Godly Policy</i> | 4  |
| 1 Educational Foundations                    | 5  |
| 2 Culture as Educator                        | 7  |
| 3 Curriculum (1)                             | 9  |
| 4 Curriculum (2)                             | 11 |
| 5 A Heart for Learning the Law?              | 13 |
| 6 To Learn Jesus                             | 15 |
| 7 The Fourth “L”                             | 17 |
| Questions for Reflection or Discussion       | 19 |

Welcome to *Educating for Godly Policy*

Society and culture are shaped in many ways by the kind of policies and practices endorsed and followed by the people. If we want those policies and practices to be more agreeable to an economy of justice and love, then we shall have to get busy in every arena where such policies are forged.

But first we need to make sure we know what constitute policies in line with godliness. Thus we shall have to give ourselves to learning as much as we can about God's Law and how it might apply for bringing more justice and love into our lives.

As we shall see, this is a difficult and long-term task, but not an impossible one.

*ReVision* studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Educational Foundations

*“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.”* Deuteronomy 6.1, 2

### *The flourishing of a nation*

The full flourishing of Israel as a nation, and of each member of the people of God, depended on their hearing, learning, and doing all the commandments of the Lord. This is repeated over and throughout the Old Testament. It is the testimony of the true lovers of God that they desire to know and keep His Law (Ps. 119). By learning and keeping the Law of God, the people of Israel would astonish, attract, and bless the nations and the world (cf. Deut. 4.6-8; Mic. 4.1-8).

We must believe that this holy and righteous and good Law is the only proper foundation of learning for us, and that, by our keeping it, the Kingdom of God advances and the power of His grace is unleashed to bless the world today (Rom. 3.3; Matt. 5.17-19; Rom. 7.12). The Law is, after all, the Holy Spirit’s curriculum for growing us into Christlikeness (Ezek. 36.26, 27; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). The alternative to learning, keeping, and teaching the Law of God is to do whatever we imagine to be good works pleasing to the Lord. But the end of such a lawless project is disappointment (Matt. 7.21-23).

The Law of God was given to provide the foundation for all learning and all of life in ancient Israel. It would serve as the acorn to the oak of all subsequent revelation from God. As God taught the Law to Moses and Moses taught it to the people of his generation, so the fathers of Israel were to teach their sons so that they would teach their own sons, in perpetuity (cf. Ps. 78.1-8).

In every household and every community of the land, therefore, instruction in God’s Law was to provide the basis for a just society in which love for God and neighbor were the defining norms of social praxis.

### *A foundation for teaching and learning*

We note here that education is more than instruction. Instruction is the transmittal of information from one who knows to one who does not. But education goes beyond mere instruction to require true learning in life, learning which, as Paul put it, leads to love (1 Tim. 1.5). The heads of Israel’s households were to teach God’s Law, not just so that all would “know” the Law, but so that they would “do” it. Obedience to the Word of God is the path to the blessings of God’s covenant. The children of Israel would show that they had learned the commandments of God as they lived them in lives of justice, evidenced by increasing love for God and their neighbors.

This commitment to the Law and Word of God as foundational to the education of the young was everywhere practiced throughout the pre-revolutionary period in colonial America. It was unthinkable in the colonies that young people should be submitted to any instruction for any length of time without being taught the commandments and statutes of God, including the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Parents insisted on it, colonial and local statutes required it, and local school boards dutifully saw to it in all their schools.

Since the middle of the previous century, assailed by specious invocations of “the separation of Church and State”, educational policy in America has increasingly denied a place to God, His commandments, and His Word in the public-school curriculum. Generations of American children have grown up in a “disenchanted” world (Charles Taylor), a world in which God, spiritual things, and the Law of God are deemed to be irrelevant if not oppressive, or at least a nuisance. The present crisis of morality, culture, and social upheaval is only the most visible consequence of that policy.

## *Educating for Godly Policy*

### *Off the foundations*

American education is in a shambles because American educational policy has moved away from the fixed foundations of God's truth and become mired in the shifting sands and unreliable tides of relativism, pragmatism, consumerism, and utilitarianism. The quest for holiness, expressed as love for God and neighbors, has been replaced by indoctrination for personal autonomy, economic security, and material happiness. Only a return to educational policy more firmly rooted in the fixed standards of God's Law will return stability, dignity, and fruitfulness to what has become an educational house of cards.

The way back to such a foundation will not be easy. We do not expect the advocates of the secular worldview to make ready room for the Law of God in this or any of the agenda of public policy decision-making. We must be prepared to fight for every inch of ground, speaking the truth in love, teaching and advocating for God's Law wherever we can, and serving our neighbors in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

Christians who seek a just and good society, who pray for the *shalom* of their communities and nation and are committed to working for its welfare (Jer. 29.7; 1 Tim. 2.1-8). And this means—as we have seen throughout this study of the Law of God and public policy—that we must also take up the cause of educational policy reform without apology, without fear, and without mincing words.

We must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, and we must work hard to show how public policies based in the Law of God chart the course of wisdom, common sense, human dignity, mutual respect, and societal and cultural flourishing.

So as we begin this brief discussion of the teaching of God's Law concerning the education of our children, let us not shy away from the challenges, just because they seem so daunting. Let us, rather, persevere on task, making the most of every opportunity to fulfill our callings as salt, light, and leaven to our broken and hurting world. It is our only hope for prolonging our days as a people and a nation.

### *For reflection*

1. At present, what place does the Law of God have in your ongoing education?
2. What opportunities for learning more about the Law of God might be available to you?
3. In your sphere of influence, what might you do to bring the Law of God more to the attention of the people you know?

*Next steps—Preparation: Choose one thing you can to begin learning more about the Law of God. Get started carrying out your choice today.*

## 2 Culture as Educator

### *All things for good*

Every aspect of life in ancient Israel was intended to reflect the goodness and justice of God. As all creation, in the beginning, was “very good,” so God intended His Law for good (Rom. 7.12), to enable His people to realize a measure of restoration to this original condition, and to flourish within it. The Law did not save them, but, having been saved, obeying the Law enabled them to know the blessings of God’s promise.

The fact that the Law of God today remains as the “core curriculum” of the Spirit’s instruction of the faithful (Ezek. 36.26, 27) should encourage us to a higher view of the Law and greater dependence on it for the revival, renewal, and awakening we seek.

The idea of writing the Law of God on the doorposts of homes and the gates of communities was intended as a symbol and meant to convey the idea that every aspect of life at home and in the community should be intended for good, as defined within the shelter and according to the direction of God’s Law. This would have included all aspects of cultural life as well.

We see this emphasis on the educating power of culture in several ways. For example, God was insistent that His people should not tolerate in their midst tokens or representations of anything in pagan culture which would have been likely to draw them away from devotion to Him and His covenant. All pagan religious artifacts were to be destroyed, and all pagan religious practices were proscribed. Certain aspects of pagan culture—farms, fields, homes, cities, and so forth—could be put to use by God’s people. However, over all these the Law of God was to stand as guardian and guide, so that no destructive pagan influences would be able to find a way into the economy of God’s people. Pagan ways—laws, protocols, conventions, and the like—were to be avoided and expunged.

### *The currents of current culture*

Any effort to educate children in the ways of the Lord will struggle to make progress while the currents of culture flow against such an aim. Contemporary culture today is materialistic, commercial, sensual, and self-serving in the extreme. Public policy has increasingly taken an “anything goes” attitude toward aspects of cultural expression, making room for forms of culture which are abominations in the sight of God.

The simple fact is that culture is a powerful educator, especially of the young. Parents and community leaders, therefore, must do whatever they can to ensure that the culture to which their children are exposed offers instruction which complements, rather than contravenes or undermines, their own efforts to help children learn to take their place in an economy based not merely on self-aggrandizement and pleasure, but on justice and neighbor-love. At the same time, parents and believing communities must encourage the making and use of culture which reflects the goodness, beauty, and truth of God—writing the words of the Law, as it were, on all aspects of cultural life.

Should certain forms of cultural expression be outlawed? The very idea seems to many like an infringement on freedom of speech. Nevertheless, in our society today, as debased as it has become in many ways, people yet realize the power of culture to affect young minds, and they have erected laws to guard against culture’s educative power. This is why films and video games are rated, certain consumer goods (e.g., alcoholic beverages) are forbidden to children, and even certain forms of speech are not permitted on the public airwaves.

However, this cultural guardianship and guidance—a function, in certain ways, of government acting for good—has been steadily eroded by the sensual and material interests of our day, and the detrimental consequences, especially on young people, are visible on every hand.

## *Educating for Godly Policy*

### *Culture within the limits of law*

Subjecting culture to the control of law is not a novel idea. It may be threatening, but only to those whose cultural preferences lie beyond what the law allows. If such people cannot change the law, in a democratic society such as ours, they will simply have to keep their cultural expressions and indulgences within the limits of what the law allows, or risk the sanctions of the law if they refuse.

In the field of education, Christians must augur for public policies that acknowledge the educating power of culture and which help to keep culture from becoming a corrupting influence in the lives of citizens. School curricula that minimize the arts, relativize ethics, promote a materialistic orientation to life, seek to undermine the home, and neglect to inculcate critical thinking skills are not helping students to gain the ennobling benefits of certain forms of culture or to identify and avoid culture that debases the soul.

Forms of pop culture which glorify violence, portray sex as recreation, promote mere self-indulgence (think: advertising), and encourage an overall attitude of incivility should be subjected to the good intentions and guidelines of the Law of God, at the very least, within the households of faithful parents. Shaping public policy in such areas is no doubt a long-term proposition; enforcing God's Law and the love for God and neighbor it prescribes can begin today.

By thus writing the Law of God on the doorposts of their hearts, minds, and homes and by working to have God's Law shape the culture of their communities, believers make a stand for righteousness and wholesomeness amid the cultural desertification which is dehumanizing our society and endangering our lives.

### *For reflection*

1. How has culture acted as an educator in your life?
2. Is it possible to judge with righteous judgment between culture that is good and wholesome and culture that is dangerous and demeaning? Explain.
3. What are some things churches might do to encourage children and young people in *making* God-honoring culture?

*Next step—Transformation: Examine your own use of culture. Are any cultural educators at work in your life that should not be there? What are some aspects of culture that are contributing to your becoming more holy and righteous and good?*



### 3 Curriculum (1)

*“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”* Deuteronomy 6.6, 7

#### *The foundation of all learning*

American education today operates from a different foundation than what is prescribed in God’s Law; thus, we should not be surprised that our society has taken a shape other than what is outlined in the Law of love.

In God’s mind, the Law of God is foundational to the education people require if they are to inherit and maintain a society based on justice and love. The Law of God is the cornerstone of all Scripture, the acorn to the oak of divine revelation. It is the “core curriculum” which the Holy Spirit works diligently to inscribe on our hearts (Ezek. 36.26, 27). Thus, it makes sense that God’s people must be instructed in His Law and in all the counsel of God (Acts 20.27). The Word of God—the Law, prophets, writings, gospels, Acts, epistles, and Revelation—must be the basis and guiding light for all other aspects of the curriculum in the instruction of the people of God.

For Americans to have allowed teaching of the Bible to be eradicated from their public-school curriculum is a measure of our communal failure as believers in affecting the shape of public policy. At the same time, it is an indicator of the foolishness which has spread throughout our society, and to which even Christians have grown accustomed. The meager efforts of churches and Christian homes to inculcate a Christian worldview in the children of the Church has not succeeded in the face of the constant barrage of materialism, utilitarianism, radical individualism, and pragmatism that comprises the curriculum of American public education.

We need to lay again the foundation of God’s Law and all His Word for our instruction and that of our children.

#### *Getting back to God’s Word*

As a society, we are not likely to realize the benefits of God’s Word as long as those to whom that Word has been entrusted evidence so little confidence in it as a curriculum for all of life. The teaching of God’s Law is neglected in churches today, and the state of instruction in all the counsel of God fares not much better. If we are ever to become again a segment of the citizenry able to affect public policy in this and all other areas of life, we shall need to become more soundly reared and firmly taught in the Scriptures of God.

Instruction in Scripture includes many things: teaching in Biblical theology, Biblical content and themes, hermeneutics, theology proper, the history of theology, ethics, and cultural criticism are only the most important components of a curriculum grounded in the Law and Word of God. Presumably, such instruction would also include developing the disciplines of personal reading and study, together with prayer and worship, which will continue to form the soul and shape the life throughout the course of a learner’s life.

That such a curriculum was foundational to early American education can be observed by even a cursory reading of a resource such as *McGuffey’s Readers*, which were in widespread use in the schools of early America. Education in colonial America produced leaders who, while they may not have all been Christians, understood the importance of spiritual and moral truths as the only proper foundation for civil order.

In the Christian community, we need to review, revise, and renew our efforts to teach Jesus to the people of God (Eph. 4.17-24). We need formal instruction at all levels and a more serious attitude toward the importance of it. To this point, education in God’s Word is regarded as optional. We have Bible study groups,

### *Educating for Godly Policy*

Sunday schools, and more. Anyone who wants to participate can. Learning Jesus is an option. The Law of God teaches us to think otherwise.

The more we lay a Biblical foundation in our churches, the more teaching, instruction, and disciple-making will occur “as you are going” about our everyday tasks and responsibilities.

#### *Toward a renewed consensus*

Education in the Law and Word of God played a major role in early American education. This was the result of a consensus that was largely defined by a Christian worldview. That consensus no longer exists. The way back to education grounded in God’s Word is via a renewed consensus, brought about by the efforts of revived men and women and renewed churches.

Americans today have become accustomed to the idea that the Bible has no place in the public education of the children of the land. We see, moreover, where this has led us as a nation. The specious invoking of the “doctrine” of the “separation of Church and State” has contributed to the ruin of American education, and this situation will only begin to be corrected when believers attain sufficient status and respectability to insist on a moral and spiritual foundation for education based on all the counsel of God in His Word.

We will not be able to achieve this through the public schools, not at first. We must, therefore, begin in our churches, homes, and Christian schools to make sure that the Word of God, which is able to equip us for *every* good work, again serves as the foundation of all our curriculum and instruction, and that the Law of God comprises a prominent place in that foundation.

In this, as in so many other areas of public policy, Christians must take a long view. We must begin to strengthen the good things that remain within our midst and to recover that which we have lost in the way of a Christian worldview. Returning to the Law and testimonies of God is only one aspect of the kind of renewal we need if we are ever to be a force for public policy that lines up more consistently with the Law and Word of God.

#### *For reflection*

1. What is your present approach to being grounded in and guided by all the counsel of God in His Word, beginning with His Law?
2. What does your church do to lay a Biblical foundation of learning for each of its members? Are you contributing to this effort in any way?
3. What can believers do to encourage one another to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?

*Next steps—Transformation: Review your present approach to growing in the Lord. Where might you improve in this effort?*

## 4 Curriculum (2)

*“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.’” Deuteronomy 6.20-25*

### *The Word in the bottom*

An early motto from Harvard declared that the college existed—as most other early American colleges and universities—to “lay Christ in the bottom” of the curriculum and the lives of the students. Similarly, an early version of the Harvard Rules insisted that “The main goal of a student’s life is to know God & Jesus Christ.”

Christians may not be able, as their forebears were, to make this part of the public school curriculum. Not at this time, that is. But we must hold to the idea of Scripture serving as the foundation and framework for all education, and we must begin to pursue policies—especially at home, in churches, and, where we can, in the schools of the land—that will bring the light of God’s Word to shine on and through all aspects of the education of our children.

Curious children will naturally wonder why we put so much emphasis on learning the Word of God in the instruction we provide for them. The answer, as we have seen, is that we want them to know, fear, love, and serve God, so that they might also be able to love their neighbors as themselves and enjoy all the blessings and goodness of God throughout their lives.

### *From God to His works*

Focusing more instruction on the Word of God will beg the question of the nature of God—Who He is and why we should love and serve Him—and will open the door for teaching all the various works of the Lord as further illustration of His glory and means by which to love Him and our neighbors. As [Vern Poythress](#) has shown in his many books, God is at work in and through all aspects of life. Our task is to explain how all learning is only complete when it is set in a framework of knowing, loving, and serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

No one is going to do this for us. If the education of our children is to equip them for knowing, loving, and serving God, we’re going to have to take the matter into our own hands.

The works of God include everything that falls within the categories of creation, providence, and redemption. Thus, all arts and sciences, history and humanities, study of institutions and culture, all languages and technologies, and much, much more are aspects of the works of God. The entire school curriculum can thus be presented as but one or another expression of the steadfast love and faithfulness of God, a resource for loving God and neighbors as the divine economy requires. This was the approach that guided the efforts of the founders of the modern universities, as well as of early American educators throughout the colonies.

By His works—manifestations of His steadfast love and faithfulness—God enables human beings to know more of His goodness and to express His glory. It makes sense that, the more children are equipped for understanding and engaging the works of God, the more they will both enjoy and glorify Him in every aspect of their lives.

Because all things are created by Christ, upheld by Christ, and ruled by Christ, then all things may be used in furthering His Kingdom (Eph. 1.15-23). We must teach our children to prepare for life as a vocation from

### *Educating for Godly Policy*

God, Who calls all of us to His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12); and we must equip them to enter any vocation as an arena for carrying out that calling.

In the unbelieving educational systems of the world, the works of God are taught, but they are not acknowledged. Thus, they are not rightly or fully understood, since they do not lead to improved knowledge of God and love for Him. In the Christian world this must not be the case. As we labor to realize an economy of justice and love, we will instruct our children to see all the works of God in creation and culture, and all legitimate vocations, as having a place in that economy, and as topics for study and disciplines for carrying out our callings as citizens and ambassadors in the Kingdom of God.

#### *For the glory of God*

God is making Himself and His glory known through the things He has made, and it is our duty as believers to search out by wisdom all that God would have us to know, and all the good He intends us to do, by entering with Him in the works of His hand (Ps. 111.1, 2).

Today the work of God is denied in all sectors of the public school curriculum. Even in Christian schools, how the Lord's work of creation, providence, and redemption relates to such subjects as mathematics, science, history, literature, and languages is only vaguely understood and, for the most part, inconsistently taught. We need a more robust approach to understanding the steadfast love and faithfulness of God as these are expressed in all His works, and in teaching all the disciplines of the educational curriculum from the perspective of the eternal wisdom and good pleasure of God.

The place to begin studying and learning for the glory of God is in the church and home. Here Christians can shape an outlook on and approach to all of life—a worldview—which will enable students to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10.3-5). We will be most effective in changing American public education policies if we concentrate now on what we can do without hindrance—teach our own children to know the Lord in all His Word and all His works.

#### *For reflection*

1. How would you describe the role your church presently has in the education of its children? On what do these efforts focus?
2. If we fail to teach our children the works of God, what worldview will likely guide their thinking and choices?
3. What can parents do to help make sure their children see the work of God in all facets of their education?

*Next step—Preparation: What can you do to better prepare yourself to understand the works of God?*

## 5 A Heart for Learning the Law?

*And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live... And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today.* Deuteronomy 30.6, 8

### *Israel's problem solved*

The story of Israel throughout the period of the Old Testament is one of islands of faithfulness surrounded by a sea of rebellion. The outline for an economy of justice and love which God provided in His Law rarely got traction among the children of Abraham. They ignored God's Law whenever they could and sought to follow the ways of the surrounding nations rather than that of the Lord. They lacked a heart for God, a love for Him that overrode all other interests, attractions, and options. Even as the LORD gave His Law to Israel a second time, He decried the fact that they did not have a heart to keep His commandments and thus to know His blessings on themselves and their children (Deut. 5.29). And even after the conquest of the land, when God proved His faithfulness in delivering the people into the land of promise, the people's hearts were ever prone to wander from Him (Jdgs. 2.10-17).

But God promised a day when He would give His people a new heart, a heart to know, love, and serve Him, and then they would begin to learn His commandments and to keep and do them, establishing policies and practices for every aspect of life that would manifest the goodness of the Lord and bring justice and love to light in the world.

At that time, the Spirit of God would be at work *within* the people of God, not merely *among* them, doing from the inside-out what they could not manage to accomplish from the outside-in: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36.26, 27).

That day has come, and we are the people Moses foresaw in Deuteronomy 30.6-8. The Spirit of God has entered the hearts of all who believe in Jesus, and He is working there to rewrite the Law of God, teach us to delight in it, and empower us to live by it (Gal. 4.6; Ezek. 36.26, 27).

Which means that we are quenching the Spirit of God (1 Thess. 5.19) if we do not take up the Law of God for ourselves, our children, our communities, and our world. And if we quench Him at this most foundational level, we cannot expect Him to unpack His fruit, gifts, and power within and through us.

### *Search your heart*

The heart is the seat of our affections—loves, desires, longings, aspirations, hopes, and so forth. From the heart, Solomon explained, all the issues of life flow through us into our world (Prov. 4.23). Solomon would say that we are only keeping our heart "with all diligence" when it and everything about us is devoted to fearing God and keeping His commandments (Eccl. 12.12). We do not seek to keep the Law of God because we believe that doing so will save us. No amount of good works will accomplish that gracious end.

But we keep the Law—and seek to apply it for justice and love—because we are saved, and the Law contains that pattern and template of good works, given from of old, that God intends all who are saved to learn and do (Eph. 2.8-10).

But this generation of believers seems more like the Israelites of old than the people Solomon, Jesus, and Paul describe. We are neglecting the Law rather than learning and keeping it, and we consider this to be most fashionable and in order, given that ours is a time of grace and not Law.

But the grace of God has come to us in Jesus Christ unto righteousness, and the Law of God marks that path that we should walk, since it was the same path Jesus walked (Rom. 7.12; 1 Jn. 2.1-6).

Each of us must search our hearts to determine whether we can say truly with the psalmist, “Oh, how I love Your Law!” (Ps. 119.97) The righteous person is so grounded in the Law of God that it continuously irrigates their soul, bringing forth the fruit of righteousness to meet the situation at hand (Ps. 1).

And as John the Baptist expected the secular authorities of his day to get in line with the Law of God (Matt. 14.1-4; cf. Lev. 18.16; 20.21), so we, as we grow in understanding and obedience to God’s Law, must work to have its holy and righteous and good precepts pervading whatever issues of public policy are before us in our time.

*Cultivating a heart for God’s Law*

How can we do this? What will it take to nurture a heart for God’s Law? Let me offer a few suggestions.

First, if you have not memorized the Ten Commandments, do so right away. They provide the core convictions from which all other laws, rules, precepts, judgments, and testimonies of God’s Law derive. The Holy Spirit is working to inscribe the Ten Commandments on our hearts, and we must join gladly in that effort by fixing those foundational statutes in our mind. Then our hearts can begin to delight in and love them.

Find some time to meditate on some aspect of the Law of God every day. The righteous person, the one in whom the righteousness of Christ is increasing, meditates on the Law of God day and night (Ps. 1). This is a deliberate effort not only to increase in understanding of all the Law of God, but to think clearly and carefully about how, through obeying the Law, we may increase in love for God and our neighbors (Matt. 22.34-30).

Talk often with others about the Law of God. The more you let the Law of God dwell in you richly, the more clearly you will see its great value, delight in its great wisdom, and realize its power to shape you for love. And the more this happens, the more you will want to share with others and to listen as they, in turn, talk of their love for God’s Law as well (Col. 3.16).

This much is clear: Without a vibrant, loving, and committed community of people who are growing in love for God and neighbors through learning, obeying, and teaching the Law of God, there will be no leaven in the public policy loaf to transform the social fabric of our land and bring more Kingdom greatness to light in our midst (Matt. 5.17-19).

*For reflection*

1. Why do you suppose the Holy Spirit considers it His primary duty to write the Law of God on our hearts?
2. Would you say of your church that you are a community of people who love, learn, and teach the Law of God? Why or why not?
3. What can keep you from beginning to nurture a heart of love for and delight in the Law of God?

*Next steps—Transformation: Commit your way to the Lord, that you will henceforth determine to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ through greater devotion to God’s Law. Begin today to make that happen.*

## 6 To Learn Jesus

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10.1-4*

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ... Ephesians 4.17-20*

### *Called to be learners*

Christians are called to be learners. “Learner” is the basic meaning of “disciple.” One is a disciple of Jesus Christ who *learns* Him, and in learning Him, is obedient to His call. God expects the disciples of Jesus to be so fervent and effective in learning that they will always be ready to teach others as opportunities arise (Heb. 5.12-14).

We cannot expect to create, advocate, or realize public policies in line with God’s Word unless we devote ourselves to learning what the Scriptures, beginning with God’s Law, teach about the great issues of our day.

Jesus Christ is the Beginning and End of all knowledge (Col. 2.1-3), the Alpha and Omega of all things. He is the ultimate Subject of all the Law of God and all Scripture (Jn. 5.39). We can never exhaust the beauty, goodness, and truth to be gained by increasing in the knowledge of Jesus. For His part, He daily beckons us to grow in the gift of eternal life—knowing Him and the Father through Him—and He speaks to us from His Word and His world, that we might increase in knowledge of Him every day.

We cannot fulfill our calling to know the Lord apart from a dedication to learning and obedience. If we are averse to learning, to increasing in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, then we should examine ourselves to see whether we are disciples of Jesus at all (2 Cor. 13.5). For all true disciples are learners, and the main project and aim of all their learning is to learn Jesus Christ.

Where shall we begin?

### *Begin here*

The anonymous author of the medieval *Liber de Ordine Creaturarum* (*The Book of the Order of Creatures*, 7<sup>th</sup> century, Irish), who was about to compose a far-ranging summary of everything that exists, insisted that the path of knowledge is not one we invent or discover on our own: “*In this we are not following an invention of our own purpose which is nothing of itself...*”<sup>1</sup> Rather, he went on to explain, the Scriptures and our forebears in the faith have shown us the way of true knowing. We must hold fast to the traditions revealed in Scripture and the world, as our forefathers have followed and lived them over the years.

But this means taking up the call to *learn* and *know* many things which today are perhaps of little or no interest to us. We need to learn more about Jesus, the Kingdom of God, and the faith that makes all things new. We need to learn about how our Christian forebears have applied the Gospel to such areas as art and literature, music, science, business, law, politics, government, care for the environment, and much, much more. We should learn as much as we can by as many means as we can.

And we need to learn more about the Law of God (cf. Ps. 119). Jesus fulfilled the Law of God in whole and

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<sup>1</sup> *Liber de Ordine Creaturarum*, Rev. J. A. Davies, tr. ed. from the text-file of Jonathan M. Wooding (Lampeter: University of Wales, 1998), p. 1.

part. The more we learn the Law, the better we'll know Jesus.

*Always more to learn*

J. I. Packer wrote that, no matter how young or old we are as believers, we can always learn something new and useful for serving the Lord (*Finishing Our Course with Joy*). We would expect nothing less of those who are true disciples of the Lord of all knowledge.

We are the light of the world, and we are called to shine our light, be it ever so small, in such a way that people will glorify God with us. As we learn what this involves, we can expect our love for the Lord to grow, our light to increase and grow brighter, and our witness to His Light to become more consistent and effective.

And as citizens of the Kingdom of God, we seek an ever-greater experience of the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit that privileged calling affords (Rom. 14.17, 18; 1 Thess. 2.12). And we cannot expect to realize that hope apart from learning, living, and teaching the Law of God (Matt. 5.17-19).

We will not be able to affect the public policies that shape and guide our nation apart from a life of active learning, beginning with the Word of God and including His Law. And as we do take a stronger hand in shaping such policies—whether our own, those of our church, or those of our community and nation—we will want to make sure that whatever policies we pursue reflect the goodness and truth of our Lord Jesus and the wisdom of His Law.

*For reflection*

1. How would you describe your attitude toward learning, and especially toward learning Jesus and His Law?
2. The goal of all Christian learning, Paul explained, is love (1 Tim. 1.5). How can growing in the knowledge of God's Law help you to grow in love?
3. What is one thing you could do today to become an even better learner than you already are?

*Next steps—Preparation: Pray daily about becoming a better learner. Let God lead you into a more active and transforming experience of learning Jesus.*



## 7 The Fourth “L”

*“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6.6-9*

*We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you. 2 Corinthians 10.13*

### *Three “L’s” of public policy*

Early in our study on the Law of God and public policy we identified three “L’s” in connection with this aspect of our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God. We considered the *logic* of public policy—what policy is, how it works, why it matters, and why we as believers must be concerned about and active in shaping public policy.

Then we examined the various *loci* where public policy is forged, especially—but not exclusively—that of civil government. If we are going to have a hand in shaping the policies that define our society, we must address them in as many as we can of the *loci*—places or arenas—where policy is made.

Finally, we discussed the *language* of public policy, where we saw that working in the realm of public policy decision-making is neither a form of preaching nor evangelism. Rather, we must meet people at the point of their interest or concern and communicate in language that they can understand and that makes sense to them and is true to our Christian convictions.

The fourth “L” of public policy, which we will herein address, is meant to guide us in preparing ourselves and others for the important work of bringing God’s holy and righteous and good Law to bear on our society and culture. Here we look at the various *levels* of our lives in which we must seek to learn and be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

### *The goal of all preparation*

I reiterate what we said in our last installment, that the goal of all preparation—including all preparation for shaping public policy—must have Christ as our ultimate standard. He is the very embodiment of all things beautiful, good, and true. Thus, we must have Him always in view in all our training and education, for of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things, to Whom be the glory forever (Rom. 11.36).

Further, Jesus is working to fill the world with Himself (Eph. 1.22, 23; 4.7-10), which He does by first transforming those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Through their transformed lives, Jesus flows like a river of living water to refresh and renew people, culture, and life in society, so that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit increasingly abound (Jn. 7.37, 38; Rom. 14.17, 18).

Paul instructs us to set our minds on Jesus (Col. 3.1-3) and do all things heartily as unto Him (Col. 3.23, 24). We are servants of the Lord Jesus and comrades-in-arms to realize more of the presence, promise, and power of His Kingdom, on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6.10, 33). Even our work in shaping the policies which guide our lives must have as its focus achieving the kind of life that would issue from Jesus Himself were He here among us.

For He is here among us, in each believer and every congregation of the Lord’s people. And we must expect, therefore, that His agenda will be our agenda so that everything we do in any aspect of our lives will be according to His plan and for His glory.

*The fourth “L”*

Which brings us to the fourth “L” of public policy—*levels* of learning and preparation. Christians are disciples of Jesus Christ, and all disciples of Jesus are *learners* of Jesus, as we have seen. Further, all disciples are expected to teach what they are learning, beginning with the Good News of the Kingdom of God and the work of Jesus, and including the Law of God and all His Word (Heb. 5.12; Acts 1.8; Matt. 5.17-19).

If this is to be the case, learning about Jesus and how the priorities, example, and teaching of Jesus can affect the policies by which we live must begin in every believer’s *heart*. Here, in the command center of the soul, is where we learn to love the Lord Jesus with all our soul and strength, where we gain the mind of Christ to take every thought captive for obedience to Him, and where His holy and righteous and good Law shapes all our values and priorities. When our heart is fully committed to Jesus we will eagerly take our place in His project of filling the world with Himself, so that, at every opportunity, we may bring the wisdom of our Lord to bear in this world (Eph. 5.15-17).

From the heart our work of learning Jesus must pervade our *households*. Fathers and mothers must encourage one another in knowing the Lord and seeking His Kingdom. They must teach their children as well. And they can learn from Jesus how to make their home a place where beauty, goodness, and truth are the norm, and from which those values are carried into the world.

Next, we must learn about Jesus in our *habitat*—the creation, culture, and community around us, including our church. Jesus reveals Himself in Scripture and creation, as we have seen. We must learn to see Him and the various ways His common grace is active in our world, to celebrate and reinforce His Presence where it can be discerned and to do what we can to extend that Presence even further.

Finally, we must learn Jesus so that He might pervade our *homeland*, and our culture and society be more transformed according to His teaching and example. This is where understanding our times and knowing what should be done to bring about God-honoring policies (1 Chron. 12.32) will see our love for Jesus and His Law have important applications.

And yet there is one more “L” that relates to public policy and which is more important than we might think.

*For reflection*

1. What are you doing to learn and teach Jesus in your heart and household?
2. How about in your habitat and homeland?
3. Is there any hope for more beauty, goodness, and truth to prevail in and characterize our society and culture apart from Christians being active in the realm of public policy? Explain.

*Next steps—Preparation: Review your current approach to learning Jesus and growing in Him. Where can you improve?.*

*Educating for Godly Policy*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Given Scripture's emphasis on learning God's Law (Deut. 6.4-9; Matt. 5.17-19), why do you think the Law is so often neglected in the teaching of our churches?
2. What can you do to improve your understanding of the Law?
3. The Law points us to Jesus, as the Lord Himself said (Jn. 5.46). How can studying the Law help us to become more like Jesus (2 Cor. 3.18)?
4. The Law of God is the "core curriculum" of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36.26, 27). Would we be more likely to be filled with the Spirit and to bear the fruit of His teaching (Gal. 5.22, 23) if we were better students of God's Law? Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you have learned from this installment in our study of "The Law of God and Public Policy"?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.