Christian Civics

American Civics

Why do you think it is good for you as a Christian to know some basics of American civics?

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security…

(text from www.archives.gov)

Compare these words from the Declaration of Independence with Romans 13:1-7.

What are your observations?

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. *(text from www.archives.gov)*

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This above is the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights, ratified in December of 1791.

That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love and charity toward each other.

(text from www.archives.gov)

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This above is section 16 from the Virginia Declaration of Rights, adopted by Virginia in June of 1776.

What similarities do you see between what each document says about religion?

What differences do you see between the two statements?

Agree or disagree? The United States was founded as a Christian nation.

What do you think was the purpose of the *establishment clause* in the First Amendment?

What current tensions arise in American society with regard to the *establishment clause*?

What do you think was the purpose of the *free exercise clause* in the First Amendment?

What current tensions arise in American society with regard to the *free exercise clause*?

How do you as a Christian and as an American citizen honor those two clauses in the First Amendment?

<u>Final Discussion</u>

Describe the difference between a Christian's and the church's role in American society.

Earth, hear your Maker's voice, your great Redeemer own; believe, obey, rejoice, and worship him alone.
Cast down your pride, your sin deplore, and bow before the Crucified.
And when in pow'r he comes, oh, may our native land from all its rending tombs send forth a glorious band,
a countless throng, with joy to sing to heav'n's high King salvation's song!

(Francis Scott Key, hymn 775 in *Christian Worship*)

What do the words of that hymn say to us as Christians and as American citizens?