

We Were Created to Work: From the Beginning, Economics Is a Fundamental Aspect of Life

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Abstract

We were created by God in his image and given the job of taking dominion over creation. This implies that we were created to work, and thus, economics was built into God's design. This cultural mandate was not revoked because of sin, but nature was cursed. Sin makes the economic task harder. It also makes governments necessary to punish wrongdoing. However, government's role is limited. Moreover, because governments use force to accomplish their end, that power can and has been misused. In the name of charity, governments often use power in illegitimate ways; the institution can never be charitable because government giving requires government taking.

Keywords

Imago Dei, cultural mandate, dominion, free enterprise, economics, government, fall, curse of nature, charity, work

I. *The Cultural Mandate*

Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. (Gen 2:28 ESV)

The first question the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks is, “What is the chief end of man?” And the answer is, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” The next question we should ask ourselves is, “How did God design his creation so that we could fulfill this end?” And then, how are we to engage the created order to accomplish the task? The answer to these questions is found in the cultural mandate. The first thing to note is that God never intended for people to be passive. Instead, he gave humanity a job. God intended for us to rule over his creation.

It is interesting to note that while Adam was created with a good mind, he did not know everything there is to know. We observe this reality when God brings the animals before Adam to see what he would name them (Gen 2:19). This is an act of philosophy wherein Adam has to begin the process of classification. He has to discover the very nature of things that God created and act on what he has learned so that he can take dominion. This would require work in which man’s discovery of the natural order would then be turned into various inventions and products that would in turn be used in the process of taking dominion. Property would be the result of each individual’s efforts in taking dominion.

But we might ask ourselves, “How does this activity glorify God, and how do we enjoy God in that work?” In the first place, God says that he worked to create nature. As his image bearers, when we work to achieve the end for which we were created, we reflect the glory of God. Not only that, but in the process, we ought to be brought into a deeper relationship with our Creator as we observe the wisdom and majesty of his created order of things. That is, in the process of working and producing things that enable us to take dominion, we should be awed by nature in a way that helps us draw closer to God. We should always see his providential hand in all of life and sing the praise of the God of creation because we look beyond nature and see the Creator. In an unfallen world, this process would go on forever, and every day would be better than the day before. We would know full well that tomorrow would be better than today. In addition, we could never get to the end of the task because there is no end to the depths of God himself or of his creativity.

There is an important point that should not be missed: God built economics into his creation from the beginning. Since we are all limited and finite and live in space and time, our work requires choice. If I investigate the nature of the various animals that God has created, I cannot use that same time to plant a vineyard. Choosing one thing over another always means there is a cost. Doing one thing means not doing another thing. This is the very first principle of economics. Namely, there is an opportunity cost to all human action. Or, to put it another way, there is no such thing as a free lunch.

A second important point that needs to be made is that we are not all the same. While Adam and Eve both bear the image of God and are equal in that sense, they did not share the same role. Furthermore, as we all know, when children are brought into this world, they have different talents, personalities, and affections. What one person excels at and is interested in is not necessarily what another is interested in. But these differences are part of God's design and are, in fact, to our benefit. As one person studies various animals and their behavior, she can write down her observations to the benefit of others. At the same time, someone else is interested in planting a vineyard and perfecting his art of winemaking, thus benefiting the student as they engage in trade with each other. This same specialization is present in the church as God has given different spiritual gifts to different people for the edification of one another (cf. 1 Cor 12:4; 14:2; 1 Pet 4:10).

II. *The Fall and the Curse of Creation*

It was not long before this process was interrupted by sin. Human rebellion resulted in numerous consequences. Among them was God's curse of nature.

Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat of the plants of the fields. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Gen 3:17–19 *ESV*)

While the disobedience of Adam and Eve resulted in the fall of creation, it did not end the cultural mandate. Rather, it meant that work in this world would be far less fruitful. Not only that, but it meant that nature would work against human efforts. The curse of the ground has resulted in nature tending to thwart our efforts to rule over it. There will be entropy and decay. Hurricanes, tornados, floods, droughts, earthquakes, and volcanoes will

sometimes destroy the things we have made. Work in this world will be difficult, and we will have to deal with a variety of hardships in it. Nevertheless, God did not set aside the mandate.

Not only will nature work against us, we also will tend to work against one another when we engage in our sin. Rather than honoring our father and mother (Exod 20:12), we are just as likely to dishonor them and to suffer loss for that reason. Instead of respecting the lives of others, we are prompted by sin to hatred, as evidenced by Cain's murder of Abel (Gen 4:8). Instead of sexual relations being kept in the context of marriage as intended by God, various forms of sexual perversion will arise in culture. Instead of respecting the property of others, we are tempted to steal what we want. Instead of honesty in all our relationships, we are prone to lies and deception. Finally, all of this stems from our prideful, covetous nature, because of which we play god and attempt to rule over everyone else. It should be said that self-righteousness is our default position as sinners as we try to pass the blame for the ills of this world onto others and refuse to recognize our own failures. Moreover, we are less likely in our sin to appreciate the glory of God. Only when we come to Christ are we willing to make a good confession of our sin and to begin to move away from it as the Holy Spirit does his work of grace in our lives, driving us relentlessly to Christ.

The important point to gain from recognizing the problems that sin has spawned is that this world will never be perfect. Simply put, there are no perfect people and, thus, there will never be perfect institutions and associations. Instead, societies and nations will come and go. Early successes in nations will be due largely to some greater adherence to truth and justice, but the tendency in history is for complacency to allow for the erosion of virtue and the fall into degradation. The question arises, can people ever be trusted with freedom and liberty to interact with one another given the pervasive nature of sin? The answer is yes, since that is the context that God designed for human action. Despite the fact of sin, we should nevertheless embrace political, religious, and economic freedom.

III. *Why Freedom Matters*

In the nineteenth century, the French economist and statesman Frederic Bastiat spoke to the reason why freedom is foundational even in the face of a sinful world. In his book titled *Economic Harmonies*, he wrote,

Deny evil! Deny pain! Who could? We should have to forget that we are talking about mankind. We should have to forget that we ourselves are men. For the laws of Providence to be considered as *harmonious*, it is not necessary that they exclude evil. It is enough that evil have its explanation and purpose, that it be self-limiting, and that every pain be the means of preventing greater pain by eliminating whatever causes it.

Society is composed of men, and every man is a *free* agent. Since man is free, he can choose; since he can choose, he can err; since he can err, he can suffer. ... Now, all error breeds suffering. And this suffering either falls upon the one who erred, in which case it sets in operation the law of responsibility; or else it strikes innocent parties, in which case it sets in motion the marvelous reagent that is the law of solidarity. The action of these laws, combined with the ability ... of seeing the connection between cause and effect, must bring us back, by the very fact of suffering, to the path of righteousness and truth. ... But if evil is to fulfill this purpose ... the freedom of the individual must be respected.

Now, if man-made institutions intervene in these matters to nullify divine law, evil nonetheless follows upon error, but it falls upon the wrong person. It strikes him whom it should not strike; it no longer serves as a warning or a lesson; it is no longer self-limiting; it is no longer destroyed by its own action; it persists, it grows worse, as would happen in the biological world if the imprudent acts and excesses committed by the inhabitants of one hemisphere took their toll only upon the inhabitants of the other hemisphere.¹

In this, Bastiat points out a significant fact about liberty: When people act in a world of freedom, they are responsible to bear the consequences of their actions. Whether the consequences are good or bad, in many cases they are likely to fall upon the one who acts. As the apostle Paul wrote, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal 6:7). There are boundaries to human action. Folly and immorality often result in hardship and suffering for the sinner himself. Suffering of this sort is a warning from God that the foolish and immoral person should change his behavior. Likewise, prosperity and success generally serve as signals that one’s actions please our Lord. However, these signals will only work as long as people are unable to impose the costs of their actions on others.

On the other hand, if the actions of one person cause others to suffer, it should result in the solidarity of the community to penalize that behavior. But, if human institutions are constructed in a way that allows people to transfer the costs of their behavior onto others with impunity, then folly and immorality can spread as the less principled people gain political power and transfer the costs of their folly and immorality. For this reason, the existence

¹ Frederic Bastiat, *Economic Harmonies*, 3rd printing (Irvington, NY: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1979), xxx–xxxi.

of material success is not a sufficient sign of moral living, and the occurrence of poverty is not the sufficient sign of immorality. To discern the issues of morality, we would have to look more closely at the institutional structures and the individual nature of human action that resulted in the prosperity or the poverty to make that assessment.

Beyond this, God is gracious and merciful and is not bringing what ought to be the immediate consequences of our sin to pass. Throughout the Scriptures we read that God is long-suffering. As a result of his patience, it can be difficult for people generally to respond rightly. This is why God's law is so important for us. In addition to conscience, the law reveals to us our individual sins and our need for salvation.

Consider for the moment how the Christian view changes everything. Christian anthropology overarches the entirety of the Scriptures. On this basis, Christian scholars have advanced various theories about social relationships that have led to the development of various societal institutions. Among these is the concept of sphere sovereignty (subsidiarity), which provides some overarching guidelines to govern social relationships. In his lectures on Calvinism (1898), Abraham Kuyper developed the concept and applied it to the various areas of life.² The idea of sphere sovereignty is straightforward enough.³ Namely, he argued that each person is created in the image of God and is both rational and volitional. On this basis, he asserted that people are free to choose their own course of action. However, they are not free from God or from his moral judgments.

This analysis is shown to point in the right direction when we consider the alternative. If a virtuous life is only possible by eradicating the freedom to act, what would society look like? Someone or some group would have to rule over everyone else. But where would we find the person or group that is totally virtuous and, thus, able to rule and direct human action to the ultimate good? If people cannot be trusted at all, then no one would qualify as a fit ruler. And since we would not be able to find a fit ruler, that position should be limited to keep those in authority from becoming tyrants who run roughshod over people and oppress them relentlessly. There is only one person who has ever been qualified to rule as king, and his name is Jesus. Moreover, he promotes setting people free when they individually submit to his rule (cf. John 8:32, 36).

² Cf. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931).

³ See his inaugural address on the topic, Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty (1880)," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 461–90.

One of the main problems in the United States today is that we have increasingly sacrificed the liberty of the person as we have replaced the natural, God-given rights of the individual with legal positivism, which asserts that individuals have no God-given rights and that the law is whatever people generally adopt for the so-called “common good.” This process began during the early part of the nineteenth century as skeptical political philosophers promoted their atheism. One prominent figure among them was Jeremy Bentham, who argued that laws should be based on a hedonistic calculus; that is, any potential law should be assessed through a cost-and-benefit analysis. According to Bentham, if the benefits outweigh the costs, then the law should be implemented regardless of its effect on the natural rights of the individual. While Bentham and his most famous student, John Stuart Mill, were generally in favor of free enterprise, utilitarianism is by its nature a collectivist view of humankind and a rejection of Christian morality. This has become more and more evident in American culture as dependency on government escalates. This has not eliminated pain and suffering but has actually promoted it and is the kind of system that allows some people to transfer the suffering for their sin onto others by legal means. In addition, it has led to increasing division in society as people are more and more pitted against one another in political terms.

Rather than engaging in mutually satisfactory trading relationships, people clamor for government intrusion into the lives of their neighbors to secure the wherewithal for their own particular desires and needs. Rather than relying on civil liberty as the foundation for human progress, the nation has progressively adopted various forms of coercive government. In each of these schemes, people are allowed to transfer the negative consequences of their actions onto others. It was this point that caught the attention of Richard Weaver in his book *Ideas Have Consequences*, in which he compares the situation to that of a spoiled child:

The spoiled child has not been made to see the relationship between effort and reward. He wants things, but he regards payment as an imposition or as an expression of malice by those who withhold for it. His solution ... is to abuse those who do not gratify him. ... The truth is that he has never been brought to see what it is to be a man. That man is a product of discipline and of forging, that he really owes thanks for the pulling and tugging that enable him to grow. ... This citizen is now the child of indulgent parents who pamper his appetites and inflate his egotism until he is unfitted for struggle of any kind. ... [If he could realize the reality that something greater than himself exists, if he could recognize the virtue of God] and not simply respond to coercion—he might genuinely realize human progress.⁴

⁴ Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 113–15.

IV. *The Fundamental Importance of the Family*

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen 2:24)

Any good economist understands that free markets offer us the best hope for economic prosperity. Even in a fallen world, the freedom for people to trade voluntarily among themselves provides an environment in which people can serve one another in mutually beneficial ways. However, such freedom must ensure that everyone is free from coercive force and deceptive fraud, which aim to steal rather than serve. As a result, a free market tends to function best when people generally embrace a healthy respect for the property rights of others. But how can such a respect for the rights of others be advanced?

This question is immediately related to a correct understanding of the role of government in a fallen world. The sad truth is that we are born into this world as sinners only interested in our immediate interest regardless of the interests of others. This brings us to the importance of the family in promoting a healthy society. Children are naturally born into the world in a family and need that family to provide everything for survival, and this is by God's design. Given that they are born sinners, the importance of this institution cannot be underestimated. Little sinners will ignore the interests of others and be rather antisocial if their needs are not immediately met.

It falls to parents to redirect the self-centeredness of the child toward an enlightened self-interest that is more social and willing to respect the rights of others. Any parent understands this is a slow process and sometimes painful for parent and child alike. Anyone who reflects honestly upon his own life will note many occasions of fits of anger along with the strong emotions of jealousy, envy, and greed. It is the parents' job to temper these emotions in the child through discipline as best they can. Indeed, this is best done by leading the child to Christ. Unfortunately, some parents neglect their responsibility or abdicate it altogether. Moreover, even with the best upbringing, children will grow up and become independent, and there is no guarantee they will live rightly as adults.

As adults, when we fail, we need people in our lives to admonish us against continuing in behaviors that are detrimental. While everyone falls short, such interaction tends to limit our outward evil actions. Nevertheless, when this fails and our evil overflows to the detriment of others, it is an occasion where outside force may be necessary. That provides a role for institutional government.

The apostle Paul provides such a role in Romans 13:1–5. In his admonishment to submit to governing authorities, he says that the role of government is to punish wrongdoers. This is a singular activity. Accordingly, it is not the purpose of government to manage the economy, or provide people with economic goods, or provide benefits for some special interests, or to engage in any other activity that people can engage in privately. In regard to the chief task, we should ask ourselves if the purpose of government is to punish *all* evildoing? That cannot be what the apostle has in mind. If that were the task of government, it would have to execute everyone including the governing officials. In this same letter, Paul has already made the case that everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23) and is therefore worthy of death. It seems clear that what he has in mind is that governments should punish the most heinous forms of evil, such as murder, rape, and theft, to secure civil peace. In addition, he well understands that governments historically stray way beyond this activity in his instructions to his readers. He argues that to be free from the fear of government, people should simply live according to God's law and do good. Like the other apostles, Paul surely recognized that doing so can well put you at odds with government as he was executed by it.

V. The Nature of Charity in a Fallen World

When I was a child, we often visited my grandparents. I thought I knew them well, but some situations brought new revelations about who my grandparents were. On one occasion, I remember something that has remained with me to this day. A family that I had never seen before and would never see again came by to visit my grandparents. But my grandparents seemed to know them well. The family was a couple with their daughter. I really cannot remember the faces of the husband and wife. They were not remarkable in any way to me. I guess I was around the age of nine or ten, so I suppose I paid them no more attention than I would most unknown adults at the time. But I do remember their daughter and do remember my grandmother's actions all the while they were in her home. The couple's daughter was both severely mentally handicapped and physically deformed. When the family arrived at my grandparents' house, they were eagerly welcomed in. After coming in, the mom quickly spread a blanket on the floor of the living room and the dad, who was carrying the child, laid his daughter on it. The little girl was around the age of four or five years old and was unable to move off the blanket. She just lay there as if she were a newborn infant. What happened next was that my grandmother immediately got down on

the floor with the little girl and focused her full attention on this child. She talked with her, played with her, and gave her undivided attention for quite some time even though the child never spoke a single word. Indeed, only the babbling sounds of an infant came from her lips.

In our modern culture, many would question my grandmother's actions; they would not see the point. After all, they would assume that the child did not know anything and would not remember anything. She was severely deformed. Moreover, in our modern world of convenience, it was clear that she was a hardship for her parents and would never be able to care for herself. But my grandmother paid her special attention as if she were the only girl in the world. Why? My grandmother taught me something that day. Every person, no matter their limitations, is created in the image of God and is therefore worthy of respect. To be sure, the curse of the ground has resulted in all sorts of hardships in this world. Natural disasters plague us. Physical illnesses cause us pain and misfortune. And we can descend into various plagues of our own making. But one thing remains certain: people are made in God's image. My grandmother knew this. I do not know what happened to that little girl after that day. I never saw her again. I suspect her life was brief. But my grandmother knew that she was significant. After all, she bore the image of God. My grandmother has since passed away. I suspect both she and that little girl are having the pleasure of regular visits and spending time together in the presence of God as they await the new heaven and the new earth.

This is the picture of true Christian charity. It is not some sort of government handout. Rather, it involves the personal interaction between the giver and the receiver. Governments are never charitable because government giving requires government taking. That is not charitable. All government action uses some sort of force to accomplish its ends. It is the duty of governments to secure the peace of society by punishing those who clearly violate the legitimate rights of others. That is, governments should punish murderers, rapists, and thieves. Governments are simply not an institution that can be the conduit of charity.

The only thing that governments can rightly do is to secure a degree of outward conformity of behavior to maintain a degree of justice in a fallen world. Governments can never change the heart of anyone. They can only punish the worst forms of transgression. They cannot mandate charity because charity is voluntary sacrifice motivated by love. Any law instituted to use force to take something from one person to give it to someone else is essentially a form of legalized theft. As one writer observes,

The original concept of charity as an expression of love, now appears to have been replaced by a concept of government-guaranteed security. ... [But this method is] uncharitable because love was replaced by force. The spirit of charity was debased to “public welfare,” and the shift from personal responsibility to grants by the state was on. ... The element which gives meaning to charity is personal responsibility, but that element is lost when the edicts of the state are substituted for the voluntary decisions of persons.⁵

J. Gresham Machen understood this very well when he wrote *Christianity and Liberalism*. He understood the importance of liberty in promoting spiritual growth. In his defense of traditional Christianity against the liberalism of his day he wrote,

The whole development of modern society has tended mightily toward the limitation of the realm of freedom for the individual man. ... It never seems to occur to modern legislatures that although “welfare” is good, forced welfare may be bad. In other words, utilitarianism is being carried out to its logical conclusions; in the interests of physical well-being the great principles of liberty are being thrown ruthlessly to the winds. The result is an unparalleled impoverishment of human life. Personality can only be developed in the realm of individual choice. And that realm, in the modern state, is being slowly but steadily contracted. ... When one considers what the public schools of America in many places already are—their materialism, their discouragement of any sustained intellectual effort, their encouragement of the dangerous pseudo-scientific fads of experimental psychology—one can only be appalled by the thought of a commonwealth in which there is no escape from such a soul-killing system. ... The truth is that the materialistic paternalism of the present day, if allowed to go on unchecked, will rapidly make of America one huge “Main Street,” where spiritual adventure will be discouraged and democracy will be regarded as consisting in the reduction of all mankind to the proportions of the narrowest and least gifted of the citizens.⁶

The true picture of charity is given by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, where he says, “Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need” (4:28). Note the order of the admonishment: If you are taking something from someone else by force or fraud, stop it. Be productive in your own life, and do not consume the fruits of your labor entirely on yourself. Only then will you be able to participate in true charity, which is always a voluntary act. Beyond this, it should also be recognized that the main goal of charity should be to promote the greatest degree of independence possible for the recipient of our gifts.

⁵ Russell J. Clinchy, “Charity: Biblical and Political,” *Essays on Liberty* 1 (1990): 159–60.

⁶ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 10–15.

Our primary example of this kind of charity is Jesus. In Christ, we have the Son of God condescending to our level in the incarnation, living a life of perfect submission to the Father and willingly going to the cross to accept the wrath of God for the sins of his people (Phil 2:5–8; cf. 2 Cor 8:9). In short, Jesus earned salvation for his people and can give his righteous record to whomever he wishes. Here is the picture of charity that those called to Christ should emulate in their lives.

Conclusion

Work is a good thing. It was instituted by God and is meant to be something that would connect us to him in deeper ways. As families emerged, new image bearers of God would enter into his creation. Not only that, but each person would be unique and possess individual gifts and talents. The process of taking dominion would require everyone to develop and employ their talents not only for their own benefit but for others' as well. The results of our efforts to take dominion over creation should result in great praise to our Creator as we increasingly discover the glory and majesty of his being.

Sin entered the world as Adam and Eve ignored God's commandment and rebelled against him. While it resulted in their alienation from God, themselves, and nature, it did not set aside the dominion mandate. In God's curse of creation, it did mean that nature would no longer cooperate with man's efforts. Work was no longer easy, nor was our work going to always be enjoyable. From that point forward, there would be hardship in our work. Nevertheless, we can find joy in our work if we seek to look beyond the production to see the hand of God and his character.

One facet of life in the fallen world is that we will all suffer. We can suffer for our own sins, and we can suffer for the sins of others. When we suffer for our own sins, it provides an opportunity for us to confess them to God and turn to him for grace and mercy and a renewed heart to put sin aside. When we suffer for the sins of others, it provides an opportunity for us to practice forgiveness and charity. We also suffer in this world as a result of the curse of the ground. Once again, this provides opportunities for us to practice charity towards others. Finally, when we suffer for Christ, it is an opportunity to understand more deeply what our Savior endured to atone for our sins. So, suffering in this world has its purpose. As the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Christians in Rome,

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and

hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom 5:3–5)

When the issue of government arises, God's ideal is for each of us to be individually self-governed in submission to his rules. Part of what it means to bear God's image is that we were meant to be individually sovereign over our own affairs. In fact, when Moses wrote Genesis, the phrase to "bear the image of God" was used throughout Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, it was not used to apply to people in general, but only to the king.⁷ Thus, when it is applied to all people, it is meant to give us a new insight into God's grant of free agency in this world.

In a fallen world, such free agency does result in personal failures to govern ourselves rightly. The family has always been God's chief institution with an authoritative structure. The man is the head of the family, and the wife follows his lead. The children fall under the rule of their parents. Thus, it falls to the family to teach self-government as all people are born into families. The main duty is to teach children the word of God as commanded in Deuteronomy 6:7. The more that children grow to embrace the word of God and his commands, the more they are likely to be self-governed and the less intervention into their lives is necessary. The church can and should come alongside the parents in this endeavor. However, the church cannot assume the duties of the parents, who are most closely connected to the children.

Nevertheless, in this world, there will always be people who simply will not respect others and must be punished. It falls to the governments of this world to do this. Yet, the power to punish can easily be employed for evil rather than good. In fact, human history proves that the tendency has been for the most prideful and haughty among us to seek for this power. When they gain it, they become overlords, tyrants, and despots. They believe that they are cut from finer cloth and imagine themselves to be gods over all. Their oppression of others proves otherwise. This is why all forms of collectivism fail and invariably result in human misery.

Leaders in Christ's kingdom do not seek power. Rather, they seek Jesus and desire to follow him. When they do this, they become servants. They set aside their desires in order that they can serve others. They do not look for political strategies or governmental means to solve the problems of this world. There are no solutions to be found in those pursuits. As Scripture

⁷ See Edward M. Curtis, "Man as the Image of God in Genesis in Light of Near Eastern Parallels" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1984).

declares, “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish” (Ps 146:3–4). There is only one solution to the problems we face in this world and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Christ’s church expands, there can be relative peace in this world, but that will only occur when his church stays “on mission, on message, and in ministry.”⁸

⁸ Harry Reeder, Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama.