

Non-separation of Church and State

In some ancient societies, the supreme ruler was often the supreme religious authority as well. Being the king and priest (or the queen and priestess) was expected by the people. What use was a monarch who did not have a direct connection to the “gods?” Even better would be to have a ruler who was one of the gods. Not only did people not desire separation of church and state, they would have been appalled at such an idea.

Of course, it’s easier to adopt a complete lack of separation when there is only one religion going. Our history shows that, when there is a plurality of religious thought, there is more freedom to pursue your faith if the government is not involved. A time will come, though, when all creation will return to only one expression of faith and belief, the day of Jesus Christ’s return to establish God’s kingdom here on earth for all eternity.

For those of us who belong to Jesus, we have already begun to live and serve in that kingdom. This week, let’s explore what it means to be ruled by a royal high priest whose subjects – every one of us, from the greatest to the least – is a member of the royal priesthood as well.

Monday – A Royal Priesthood

“For a beggar to live at court is not so much as the King to dwell with him in his cottage.” William Gurnall, 17th c. English pastor and writer

1. Please read 1 Peter 2:9-12. What do the words “royal” and “priesthood” bring to mind?
2. What do you learn in Exodus 28:1-2 and 29:1-9 about God’s view of those he calls to priesthood?
3. Hundreds of years before Aaron’s birth, long before the creation of the nation of Israel, Melchizedek King of Salem and “priest of God Most High” blessed Abraham in Genesis 14:18-20. How do you think Melchizedek viewed his responsibilities? How should you view yours as a member of his royal priesthood?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Hebrews 7:1-28. Jesus is our royal high priest. How does knowing this help define your own position with God as a follower of Jesus and a member of God’s royal priesthood?

Tuesday – Chosen to Belong

“The issue is now clear. It is between light and darkness and everyone must choose his side.” G.K. Chesterton, 19th-20th century British writer

1. Please read 1 Peter 2:9-10. What does it mean to be chosen by God to belong to him?
2. See Colossians 1:9-14 and James 1:16-18. What do they tell you about God’s wonderful light?
3. Peter says we are to be a “holy nation.” How does the concept of being called out of darkness into God’s “wonderful light” help you understand what this holiness should look like in your daily life?

Making it Personal: What changes should you make in your life to live in God’s light?

Wednesday – War against Your Soul

“Clemency is the surest proof of a true monarch.” Pierre Corneille, 17th c. French playwright

1. Please read 1 Peter 2:10-11. In his mercy, what has God done to stop the forces at war against your soul?
2. Read Romans 2:4. What is Paul arguing against? Have you ever had such an attitude towards God’s mercy? Under what circumstance do you see this happen most often?
3. Hosea prophesied at a time when the Israelites lived in almost constant rebellion against God. What does Hosea 1:1-11 tell you of the consequences of that rebellion and God’s ultimate kindness to his people?

Prayer Focus: Ask the Lord to help his people respond to his mercy with repentance and obedience.

Thursday – Living Well or Living Good?

“Do little things as though they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus Christ who does them in us, and who lives our life: and do the greatest things as though they were little and easy, because of His omnipotence.” Blaise Pascal, 17th c. French philosopher

1. Please read 1 Peter 2:12. What does it mean today to “live among the pagans?”

Text Insight: 1 Peter 1:1 tells us that Peter was writing to Christians who lived in an area ruled by Rome and heavily influenced by its society, including official and unofficial pressure to worship multiple gods.

2. What does Jesus tell us in Matthew 5:13-16 about the effect of living in a way that allows nonbelievers to see what we do for God? What steps can you take to live out Jesus’ command?
3. Consider Paul’s words in Galatians 6:7-10. What does the way you live say about your relationship with God?

Making it Personal: What does your life tell people about God? Pray for God to use you to bring him praise.

Friday – People of God’s Own Choosing

“For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.” Jesus, Matthew 13:17

1. The call of Samuel: In 1 Samuel 3:1-21, how did the boy Samuel come to know God? What does verse 7 tell you of his relationship with God at that time? How would you describe the counsel Eli gave Samuel?
2. The call of Isaiah: In Isaiah 6:1-13, how do you think Isaiah felt? What did God do for him in verse 7?
3. The call of Jeremiah: In Jeremiah 1:1-19, how did Jeremiah initially respond to God’s call? What assurances did God give him?

Making it Personal: How do the experiences of these three prophets encourage you in responding to God’s call for you to join his royal priesthood?

For the Weekend: Re-read 1 Peter 2:9-12. How can you work with other believers – God’s chosen people – to show the world around you who God is?