



OAKS IN OFFICE

BIBLICAL ESSAYS FOR POLITICAL LEADERS

RALPH DROLLINGER

So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

ISAIAH 61:3b

Preface

Oaks are amazing trees. We have several huge oaks bordering our primary residence in Southern California. Oaks, I believe, provide a great metaphor for mature-in-Christ Public Servants! Their roots go deep, they possess internal fortitude, and their leaves do not wither (cf. Psalm 1). They stand up to drought, fire, wind, and floods. They are statuesque and noble, providing strength and shelter to their surrounding environs. They are a fitting picture of what God desires of His servants whom He has placed in public office.

The mighty oak tree spends the majority of its strength fortifying its infrastructure so that its roots will sustain the long sweeping branches that it will push up to twenty-five feet outward and parallel to the ground. It drives its roots deep into the earth, anchoring it firmly so it may stand steadfast in powerful storms that topple other weaker trees around it. Only a small bit of its energy is spent on external growth, expanding its trunk and stretching its boughs toward the sky.

It is our prayer to mature the Christian Public Servant in this way, with the development of the inner person. A steady diet of sound Biblical doctrine will grow Public Servants in their faith. Regular Bible study will help them develop critical discernment that will guide and sustain them in battles over controversial and trendy issues. Anchored in truth and righteousness, they will stand resolute and unwavering amid the storms of political debate. Scriptural Truth and God's precepts that have rooted in their hearts will lead them as they create public policy. This is our prayer and the reason for this book.

Since 1996 I have been writing in-depth Bible studies for Public Servants. Back then, my wife Danielle was the executive director of a powerful political action committee in California that had as its primary objective to recruit, train, and help believers get elected to the legislative body of the state of California. This all occurred during what was commonly known as "the Gingrich revolution" in Washington D.C. Her PAC rode that wave of change, investing in and winning thirty-six political races in the California legislative body over a six-year period, or three election cycles.

But it was obvious something was lacking from their formula and their attempt to change the direction of California. The Members they had helped get elected, many being very young in Christ, seemed to go to Sacramento and then not make any difference. In fact, some who were elected seemed to lose their testimony for Christ altogether while being away from their home, church, and environs, for four days a week, seven to eight months a year. Danielle was frustrated with this outcome.

At the same time, I was heavily involved in the American sports ministry movement that was booming. I was serving as the president of the trade organization of America's sports ministries. In our organization, thousands of churches were represented that were using sports to grow their congregations, and eighty-four national parachurch sports ministries had been created through their auspices—outposts for Christ on most every high school, college, and professional sports team in America—placing fulltime chaplains, or better, Bible teacher/disciple-makers on those teams, pinpointing their ministry to evangelize and build athletes in Christ. The American sports ministry movement was wildly successful in reaching athletes for Christ and still flourishes to this day through ongoing well-established parachurch ministries such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action, and Pro Athletes Outreach.

One day it dawned on Danielle and me that, given her realization that political leaders needed someone to minister to them while in office—a Bible teacher, if you will, on their Capitol campus—and my proficiencies in understanding how that is best accomplished, at least in the athletic world, we could form a new ministry organization that would create outposts for Christ on the campuses of political leaders! To our knowledge going in, nothing of that sort that was true to Scripture existed; we would later find out that was indeed true. In America there were only three state capitals with disciple-making ministries.

In 1996, sensing a very strong call of God, both of us quit our jobs to found Capitol Ministries® in the California capital.

In those twelve ensuing years of ministry in the California capital, I found that written Bible studies were necessary in order to best serve Members of the California Assembly, Senate, and Constitutional Officers who might not otherwise, due to schedules, be able to attend our weekly Members Bible studies in the capital.

As I began the discipline of writing in-depth Bible studies every week—studies that were not only exegetically sound, but contained an application relevant to a Public Servant—I soon realized that there were little if any equivalent materials available.

All the more, I began to form earnest convictions that if our state and national leaders did not have a clear understanding of what God’s Word has to say regarding matters, they could not possibly be expected to lead in the best possible direction. This is especially true as our culture slips away from its Judeo-Christian heritage and culture and into postmodern secularism. And in fact, fewer and fewer churches serve a high protein diet of the Word of God to their congregants, resulting in even the best Christian Public Servants being woefully untaught in the precepts of God’s Word. Sobering to this reality in my California capital ministry created a deep unction in my heart as to how important my Bible teaching ministry was—or at least should be to the lawmaking process—and how important written Bible studies are to the life of overbooked Public Servants. To use the summary thoughts of Chuck Colson in this regard, he stated it best I think when he said that in essence the Bible and Bible studies are “pre-political.” What Colson meant by that coined word is this: that before the political process begins, every legislator and every Public Servant should know what the Bible has to say regarding a given matter. How can one possibly expect to have a state or nation that is based in Biblical precepts if the leader doesn’t know what the Word of God says about a matter?

It is now twenty-one years later as I publish *Oaks In Office* with Nordskog Publishing Inc. Having written hundreds of Bible studies aimed at helping Public Servants know the mind of God on matters, I have chosen fifty-two of those

studies that I believe are most pertinent to their understanding and growth.

As you will notice from studying the Table of Contents, I have created sections that build on one-another. The progression of the material suggests that the spiritual maturity and character formation of the Public Servant leads to the development of godly positions on issues while serving in office. Becoming a sustaining, strongly influential *Oaks in Office* has much more to do with simply being Biblical on the issues. That is why before and after Part IV, “Building Biblically Based Convictions About Today’s Issues,” there is much content intended to forge Biblical character in the life of the political leader. This cannot be overstated. It is critically important to the direction of the nation that every elected or appointed official does not do what is “*right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25), but rather that they bring every vote “*captive to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:5). But perhaps of even greater importance is the formation of Christlikeness in the life of the individual. There is found the sustainability necessary for godly influence in office. *Oaks in Office* therefore addresses both personal godliness and corporate righteousness.

By God’s doing, it is now twenty-one years from the time Danielle and I birthed Capitol Ministries® in the California state capital. Since then we have watched our Lord birth many more ministries in other U.S. State capitals and Federal capitals throughout the world with similar emphasis on teaching the Word of God and making disciples. In fact, we are now in Washington D.C., where I have the God-given privilege of teaching weekly Bible studies to a majority of the Members of the White House Cabinet, many Senators, and many House Members. This advancement of the ministry is not my doing, but God’s. And it has been quite the ride, quite the adventure! Capitol Ministries® and its expansion has much more to do with God honoring the explication of His Word than it does with me and my limited abilities. To Him be the glory!

It is appropriate and customary in a tome like this to thank God for the tremendous influences He has placed in my life that have in a human sense equipped me for such a task as this. Those influences that follow are in no particular order of importance. Coach John Wooden of UCLA fame, for whom I had the privilege of playing as a member of his last two national championship teams. Coach was hugely influential in my character formation, understanding of industriousness and the necessity of preparedness. Dr. Bill Bright, whom I had the privilege of serving and being on his staff for many years through playing basketball for Athletes in Action (a ministry of then Campus Crusade for Christ, now CRU), during my sports ministry days. Dr. Bright hugely influenced the visionary side of my thinking and ministry, creating in me by his modeling a capacity, understanding, and confidence that God can use ordinary people to reach around the globe with the Gospel. He taught me not to think small, but to trust God for things beyond personal ability and comprehension. Dr. John MacArthur, who personally gave me a passion and ability through his seminary, The Master’s Seminary, to carefully, skillfully, and responsibly exegete the Word of God with

week-in and week-out tenacity and precision. He created a realization in me best summarized many, many years ago by the personal words of my friend, Dr. David Jeremiah: “Ralph, God honors His Word. Therefore be about explicating His Word if you expect Him to increase your ministry.”

I would like to think that I am a combination, to a much lesser degree, of these individuals and their respective strengths. Apart from Christ, they are the human influences He has given me whom I continually model after the most. They have been the underlying influences that help to explain best what Capitol Ministries® is all about, and I thank God for allowing me to rub shoulders over many, many years with each of them.

My prayer is that *Oaks in Office* will be used by God to help shape the character and direction of the next generation of political leaders, not only in America but throughout the world. Presently my weekly written Bible studies are translated into three other languages and it is our hope and prayer that *Oaks in Office* will soon be translated into other languages as well for use in our emerging and growing international ministries.

Here then are fifty-two of my most pertinent Bible studies, reformatted into book form, that are intended to be the training curriculum not only for existing political leaders but even more for the next generation of leaders—the up-and-coming Public Servants. May God use *Oaks in Office* to form a Christian worldview in those who have emerging political careers, those men and women who will someday lead our great nation and other nations as well.

Oaks in Office is particularly designed to be used by Capitol Ministries’® trained ministry leaders who sense a call to reach local government leaders for Christ. We call this division of our ministry CivicReach® and we have produced *Oaks in Office* primarily for them: to equip CivicReach® leaders with good Bible-study materials that are custom designed to best minister to up-and-coming political leaders who desire to please God with their life and service. Enjoy the book if you are one of these people reading this! Our most focused prayer is that God will use *Oaks in Office* to mature you in Christ as you serve Him in His institution of Civil Government.



Ralph Drollinger

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:13–16

CHAPTER 1

The Missing Mandate in Modern Missions

The foremost need of Public Servants is to know Christ. This is why Capitol Ministries® is focused on changing hearts by sharing the Gospel. Good legislation is important, but men and women can hardly be expected to make policies in accordance with sound, Biblically based principles if they are at odds with the author of Scripture. Only the Gospel has the power to change a heart. We believe that the objective of evangelizing and discipling political leaders is of the highest importance in the Capital Community. We need more disciplers!

Is there a Biblical basis for a calling to minister to political leaders? If so, how important is this in the mind of God? The answer is that Biblical evidence for modern missions to Public Servants runs through the whole Bible. Let's examine the supporting passages and help you to build a conviction regarding it.

The best way to reach other Public Servants with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is through evangelistic efforts. As a Public Servant, this should be of great interest to you! In that political leaders are essential to the Great Commission, it follows that you should be involved in its fulfillment! So let's explore the Biblical mandate to reach political leaders with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Exploring the Mandate

The following three passages from the New Testament provide the best initial understanding of the missiological emphasis as it touches on political leaders, which runs throughout the Word of God.

First Timothy 2:1–4

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The apostle Paul urges Timothy to pray evangelistically, not only for all people in general, but specifically for “*kings and all who are in authority.*” Very importantly, verse 1 begins, “*I urge.*” These words come from the original Greek *parakaleo*, which is a compound word comprised of the preposition *para* and the verb *kaleo*. *Para* means “alongside,” while *kaleo* means “to call.” Put together, *parakaleo* is an emphatic verb that means “to call to one’s side.” It is in the first-person singular: “*I urge* [you Timothy].”

Paul heightens this command with the words, “*first of all,*” or *protos* in the Greek, to indicate its priority (*protos* signifies preeminence rather than sequence). In other words, Paul wants Timothy to make it a priority to pray evangelistically for kings and those in authority. You’ll notice a confirmation of the intent of this urging in the last portion of this passage, where it says that God “*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”

What we see here is not an afterthought in Paul’s mind. Concern for political leaders is an emphasis that runs throughout his ministry, having been born at his Damascus road conversion. Notice these words of Jesus Himself in Acts 9:15:

Acts 9:15

“Go, for he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.”

Here Jesus reveals to His messenger Ananias that Paul (at that time known as Saul) is His *chosen instrument*. From the very outset of his calling Paul is *“to bear My [Jesus’] name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.”*

**Kings are one of the specific groups that
God calls Paul to evangelize.**

There were many cities in the Roman Empire that had not heard the Gospel. So, the question might be asked, how did Paul decide where to travel? Certainly, there were many factors he considered, but one of those was the presence of political leaders. You will see below that his calling informed him regarding which cities he would go to in order to establish churches. It is very important to understand that the majority of cities Paul chose to visit were chosen in response to his Acts 9:15 calling. Note that many of those cities were capital cities in the Roman Empire:

- Paphos was the capital city of Cypres
- Perga was the capital city of Pamphilia
- Pisidia Antioch was the capital city of So. Galatia
- Iconium was the capital city of Lyconia
- Thessalonica was the capital city of Macedonia
- Athens was a leading city of Greece
- Corinth was the capital city of Achaia
- Ephesus was the capital city of proconsular Asia

Paul ministered to both Jews and Gentiles, but among the Gentiles, Paul was specifically called to evangelize kings. That’s why he went to these leading cities, as we shall see now.

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Of the thirteen conversions recorded by Luke in the book of Acts, seven are politically related people.

This emphasis of reaching governing leaders is vividly illustrated in the twenty-eight-chapter narrative of the book of Acts. It is insightful to note that Luke wrote both his Gospel account and the book of Acts to someone by the name of Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). In that he calls him *most excellent*, a title used to address governors (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25), it is quite possible that Luke wrote for the purpose of persuading a government leader to come to faith in Christ. This would explain why over half of the individual conversion accounts recorded in the book of Acts involve political figures. Luke's purpose could be either to relate to Theophilus that other government leaders have come to Christ, or to illustrate the fulfillment of Paul's call in Acts 9:15, if not both. Note the vocations of the following Acts converts:

- The Ethiopian eunuch was the treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:27)
- Cornelius the centurion was a military leader (Acts 10:17)
- Blastus was the king's chamberlain (Acts 12:20)
- Sergius Paulus was a Roman provincial governor (proconsul) (Acts 13:7)
- The Philippian jailer was a keeper of prisoners (Acts 16:27–33)
- Dionysius was the Areopagite judge (Acts 17:34)
- Publius was the governor of Malta (Acts 28:7–8)

Paul's Acts 9:15 calling gives insight into why he desired to visit Rome and subsequently even travel as far as Spain. In Acts 23:11 the Lord reveals to Paul that he must testify of Him in Rome:

“Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”

The apostle longs to fellowship with the church in Rome (Romans 1:10–12), but he has at least one other reason for making the voyage: evangelism. This is evident from Acts 27:24, where the Lord adds that Paul “*must stand before Caesar.*” Therefore, out of obedience to his calling, Paul is compelled to take the Gospel to Caesar. History shows that

Caesar did not receive Christ, but Philippians 4:22 indicates that Paul's efforts are not in vain, as he is used by God in a powerful way amongst those in the emperor's palace:

All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

Paul is a man governed by the vivid memory of his conversion as recorded in Acts 9, and specifically his calling to reach the leaders of the world with the Gospel. This consuming evangelistic zeal encompasses Paul's life after his Damascus road experience. His mission to Spain is aligned with that calling. Spain was a mineral-rich colony on the westernmost edge of the Empire. It had a population of Jews and Gentiles who hadn't heard the Gospel. Did Spain have a contingency of political leaders? Yes. The orator Quintilian, the writer Martial, and the statesman Seneca resided there. The Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian were born there as well. Clement of Rome (writing in AD 95), speaks of a time when Paul had reached Spain and "had borne his testimony before the rulers."¹

The apostle labored to reach political leaders with the Gospel throughout his years of ministry. His deep concern for their salvation perhaps explains why he gave such an emphatic mandate to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:1-4, as we read above. There Paul instructs Timothy to pray for the salvation of Rome's political leaders. From Genesis to Revelation, God's people pursue evangelistic ministry to political leaders in foreign nations, and the same principle applies to believers today. Christians should desire to see their political leaders come to know Christ. In fact:

As a political leader, you are uniquely qualified to follow Paul's calling.

Expanding the Mandate

In addition to the apostle Paul, the apostle Peter also exemplified this emphasis of ministry in the New Testament. Moving forward from the church age, tribulation saints will have a ministry to unbelieving kings.

Looking the other way in the Bible, back toward the Old Testament nation of Israel, we find that God's chosen people were to be representatives of God's glory, shining forth His holiness to the Gentile nations of the world. And even more specifically, the nation Israel was to testify of God to political leaders in those Gentile nations. We will see this in some select passages that follow.

The ministry of reaching political leaders runs throughout all of Scripture. One of God's choice servants says in this regard, *"I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings And shall not be ashamed"* (Psalm 119:46).

Exemplifying the Mandate

The proposition that there is a missing mandate in modern missions today—that of reaching political leaders as a first priority—can be supported by looking at prior Biblical epochs when that mandate was operative. Bible history points to an historical thread of emphasis near to the heart of God that is woefully underemphasized in today's Christian missiology.

THE MINISTRY OF OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL

God promises Abraham he will one day receive land, have numerous descendants, and be blessed by God (Genesis 12:1–3). Four centuries pass as Abraham's descendants grow from one family into twelve tribes and finally into the nation Israel. The Lord calls them out of the world to be His *"own possession," "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"* (Exodus 19:5–6). Israel is called to demonstrate the holiness of God to all the surrounding nations.

God intends for His people to be a light to the Gentile nations in a general sense, and more specifically He expects His people to be a light to the leaders of those nations. Isaiah 60:3 tells us in this regard:

"Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising."

Isaiah 62:1–2 suggests the same type of ministry for Israel. The Lord expects Gentile leaders to take notice of His chosen people, a nation set apart for His purposes. One illustration of Israel's fulfillment of God's calling to reach political leaders is the Queen of Sheba, when she visits Israel during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 10:1–10). The queen travels a distance of fourteen hundred miles to see the splendorous city of Jerusalem, and she does not leave disappointed. First Kings 10:5 (ESV) says that as a result of the visit, *"there was no more breath in her,"* which is an OT euphemism similar to our current expression, "She was simply blown away!" The queen is overwhelmed, and proceeds to praise the Lord (1 Kings 10:9). The words of Jesus in Luke 11:31 imply that during this time the queen is converted. Solomon's testimony and the testimony of God's blessings on Israel at that time prove compelling in evangelizing this foreign leader.

A second illustration of Israel's obedience to her calling to reach political leaders from Gentile nations occurs when Solomon finishes the temple. He gives thanks to God. During his thanksgiving prayer he reminds Israel that the

Lord has blessed them for a purpose: “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else” (1 Kings 8:60). The temple itself even includes a court for the Gentiles to worship the God of Israel. As the nations see Israel’s light, the hope is that, like the Queen of Sheba, they will come from afar, led by their kings, to worship the God of Israel. God wants Israel to be magnetically attractive to Gentile nations and their leaders. States Isaiah 60:11 in this regard:

“Your gates will be open continually; They will not be closed day or night, So that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, With their kings led in procession.”

The ministry of Old Testament Israel is further illustrated in yet another way by the prophetic ministry of Jonah. Though a reluctant Jewish minister, Jonah eventually goes (in a “whale” of a roundabout way) to the Gentile city of Nineveh and calls upon its citizens to repent of their wickedness. Many listen, and soon Jonah has the opportunity to call the king to repentance. The king responds to the call to repentance and orders the entire city to follow suit, as we read in a very profound passage of Scripture (Jonah 3:3–10).

As illustrated by these three passages, Israel possessed a great calling to shine forth to the nations of the world with God’s glory, and an important aspect of that was to reach the leaders of those nations.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES

Jesus sends out His disciples with a charge to evangelize political leaders. When He commissions the twelve, He tells them they will be “*brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them*” (Matthew 10:18).

THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES

As a crescendo to the various politically related conversions in the book of Acts, Paul seeks to minister to Caesar and his household by visiting Rome. And even beyond that He desires to visit Spain to preach the Gospel to leaders residing there (Romans 15:23–24). Therefore Paul’s charges to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:1–4), as previously noted, and to Titus in Titus 3:1 underscore the importance of carrying forth this mandate today in the church age.

Paul is not the only apostle imbued with a passion to minister to kings; Peter has the same aspirations, albeit not evidenced quite as directly.

In 1 Peter 2:12, Peter exhorts his audience to live exemplary lives amongst the Gentiles for one purpose: that

they may “*glorify God in the day of visitation.*” This is his way of saying that he desires for Gentiles they come into contact with to come to know Christ. He knows that poor conduct in the church will lead to a poor testimony in the community. Interestingly, verses 13 and 14 of 1 Peter 2 expand upon this idea with respect specifically to political leaders. Simply stated, evangelism to Gentile kings and governors will only be effective to the extent that believers humbly submit themselves to those leaders and the laws they enact (so long as they are not unbiblical of course). So when we read 1 Peter 2:13–14 we must remember that it is set in the context of being a good witness to leaders:

Submit yourself for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him ...

THE MINISTRY OF TRIBULATION SAINTS

During the Olivet Discourse in Mark 13, Jesus teaches on events that will unfold during the tribulation. Wars will erupt, natural disasters will occur, and persecution will be common for Christ’s followers. Mark 13:9 concludes this description by adding:

“But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.”

I believe that followers of Christ will be raptured before this prophecy is fulfilled, and that it is those who come to Christ during the tribulation who are being spoken of here. They will be witnesses to governing leaders *for Jesus’ sake*. It is noteworthy that amongst the limited details Jesus provides regarding the tribulation, he makes specific mention of evangelizing political leaders. Mark 13:9 states that believers “*will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.*” Thus, the thread of ministry to those in the political arena will continue even during this future epoch of great upheaval.

THE MINISTRY OF MILLENNIAL SAINTS

Subsequent to Christ’s second coming, God’s people will no longer minister to kings, for they will become kings themselves (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:4, 6). Those who have been redeemed will be given the privilege of helping rule on earth. When Christ returns and His kingdom has come, He will grant believers governing positions similar to those held today. Believers will then rule with perfection under the authority of “*the King of kings.*” The perfect future political leadership of Christ and His called-out ones is impossible to achieve in today’s fallen world. Praise God for that future day! The type of ministry will change from one of pursuing to one of being, but God’s

keen interest in government leaders will nonetheless remain intact even during the millennial kingdom.

Engaging the Mandate

The Great Commission includes the specific strategic element of emphasis on reaching political leaders throughout the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This insight becomes quite evident from the passages examined in this chapter. Capitol Ministries® is a missional response to this mandate. We welcome your partnership in this God-ordained calling! Are you pursuing what is foremost in importance—*protos*—in the fulfillment of the Great Commission?

Has this brief exploration caused you to begin to question whether missions to political leaders should remain a “missing mandate” of evangelism? With all the confusion about Church and State, perhaps you’ve always wondered if it is even appropriate for believers to be involved in politics at all. Rather than allow that uncertainty to undermine you, let’s face the question head-on, as we embark together on this journey of Biblical discovery.

1. John Chapman, “Pope Clement the First,” accessed October 12, 2017, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/info/1clement-cathen.html>.