Engaging the World
Biblically through
Christian Civic Stewardship
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**Introduction to Engage the Bay State:**

The vision behind this study is to equip Christians to effectively and winsomely engage our culture on many of today’s “hot button” issues that are challenging our shared family values. In an effort to make the classes as practical as possible, this study guide and accompanying videos explore recent and local events. In fact, much of the content is “ripped from the headlines” and serves as a case study on the state of our law and culture.

Each chapter follows the same basic framework. First the issue will be identified and dissected, typically starting with a relevant news item. Next the Biblical foundations which surround the issue are explored. Lastly, as an application, each chapter ends with the current status of the issue in MA and provides practical suggestions for shaping our response as faithful Christian ambassadors.

Questions are also provided to aid discussion along the way. Our prayer is that this study will serve the Church, and produce healthy, Biblical, and challenging conversations. I hope that we will all be inspired to speak, advocate, and serve, so that our culture might be transformed.
Recognizing that healthy families are indispensable to the preservation of a strong and free society, Massachusetts Family Institute (MFI) is dedicated to strengthening the family and affirming the Judeo-Christian values upon which it is based. Established in 1991, MFI is a non-partisan public policy organization dedicated to strengthening families in Massachusetts. This puts MFI on the frontlines of the battles to preserve marriage, protect the sanctity of life, promote parental rights, and defend religious liberty, as well as a number of other key social issues affecting the family. We exist to be a voice for the family and our shared values in the Commonwealth. We accomplish our mission by:

- Researching, preparing and disseminating materials concerning the status of the family in Massachusetts.
- Educating lawmakers and media about family issues as a voice for Judeo-Christian values in the Public Square.
- Providing resources for families and churches.
- Partnering with local churches to raise the standard for marriage and families.

MFI is also part of a broad national coalition and is the Family Policy Council in MA for Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council and the Alliance Defending Freedom.
Andrew Beckwith, President
Massachusetts Family Institute

A native of West Newbury, Massachusetts, Andrew graduated summa cum laude from Gordon College and cum laude from the University of Minnesota Law School. From 2004 to 2007, he served as a judge advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps in Japan, and he continues to serve our country in the Marine Reserves with the rank of major. From 2007 to 2012, he served as assistant chief counsel in the Boston Office of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Andrew is a man of strong faith and devoted to his wife, Karen, and their four children. He joined the board of MFI in 2010 and took on the role of president in 2014. Andrew uses his training as a litigator and his experience advocating for family values to educate and equip people of faith to make a difference in our culture. From the State House to local schools and houses of worship, Andrew is dedicated to leading MFI’s mission of strengthening the family and affirming the Judeo-Christian values upon which it is based.
What is the relationship between religion and government; between our churches and the power of the state?

We have likely all heard, with convincing regularity, repetition of the phrase, “separation of church and state.” Many people even assume that these words are found in our Constitution. They are not. In fact, they are taken from a letter by Thomas Jefferson to a group of Baptists in Danbury, CT in 1802 with the purpose of clarifying that the First Amendment protects churches from being harassed by the government.

You may have also heard the claim that, “you can’t legislate morality.”

Is this true? Do not all laws have some moral impetus as their basis?

We have laws against theft, murder, prostitution and perjury, for example. Are these not, at least in part, a reflection of a moral code?
What did one of Massachusetts’ most famous judges have to say about this question?

“The law is the witness and external deposit of our moral life. Its history is the history of the moral development of the race.”

- Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1897

If this is true, how do we define ‘our moral life’ as a people? Perhaps the question shouldn’t be, “can we legislate morality?” but “whose morality will be codified into law?”

For your Info

Oliver Wendall Holmes Jr. was born in Boston in 1841. He served on the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court from 1882 until 1902, and then served as an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1902 until 1932.
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Chapter I: Church and State
It can be awkward or difficult to talk about morality and law. Such a discussion can quickly become “personal” or “political.”

In fact, the three things we’re “not supposed to talk about,” sex, religion and politics, will quickly come up if we venture into the realm of law and morality.

Contentious issues like “gay marriage” or abortion, for example, lie squarely at the intersection of sex, religion and politics. And yet, this is precisely where so much of our world is suffering from the brokenness of sin and the confusion of not knowing God’s Truth. As people of faith, are we not called to engage as salt and light in this area at least as much, if not more, than all other areas of life? What is our responsibility to be good stewards of the rights we possess as citizens in our Commonwealth and our nation? Do you feel comfortable talking about these issues amongst friends, family, or co-workers?

Is your church or small group a “safe place” to explore the intersection of Biblical morality, law and culture? Do you feel discouraged or confused by the headlines you read that indicate a culture running away from our shared moral tradition?
In September of 2012, a federal judge ruled that a convicted murderer in Massachusetts, serving a life sentence, was constitutionally entitled to a sex change operation because he suffers from Gender Identity Disorder.

WHO:

Federal Judge Mark Wolf-
Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts. He was nominated by President Ronald Reagan and took office in 1985.

Convicted Murderer Robert Kosilek-
Robert now goes by the name “Michelle.” He murdered his wife in 1990.

Court documents demonstrate clearly that Robert was horribly abused as a child. Although he suffered from mental and emotional issues, there was no mention of anything medically wrong with his body.

Nevertheless, Robert believes he is a woman “trapped in a male body,” and that this surgery is medically necessary to relieve his severe emotional distress. For example, he has testified that his male genitalia remind him of the abuse he suffered at the hands of other males as a youth, and he has tried while in prison to castrate himself.
**WHAT:**

*Sex Change Operation* - AKA “sex reassignment surgery,” (SRS) is “a procedure that changes a person’s external genital organs from those of one gender to those of the other.” That is, to radically disfigure an otherwise healthy body in order to satisfy a diseased mind.

**WHEN:**

Kosilek’s case was originally filed in 2000. Judge Wolf’s ruling was issued in September of 2012.

**WHERE:**

John J. Moakley Federal Courthouse, Boston, MA

**WHY:**

Constitutionally Entitled-
Judge Mark Wolf stated in his 129 page decision that under the 8th Amendment to the US Constitution, our government is prohibited from submitting prisoners to cruel and unusual punishment. This includes the denial of necessary medical treatment. Kosilek’s attorneys were able to produce a phalanx of local doctors who testified that the only medically adequate means of treating him was to give him SRS.

FOR YOUR INFO

“Gender Identity Disorders” are characterized by strong and persistent cross-gender identification accompanied by persistent discomfort with one’s assigned sex....Adults with Gender Identity Disorder are preoccupied with their wish to live as a member of the other sex. This preoccupation may be manifested as an intense desire to adopt the social role of the other sex or to acquire the physical appearance of the other sex through hormonal or surgical manipulation.¹

THE MEDICAL EXPERTS WHOSE OPINIONS WERE PRESENTED TO THE COURT CAME FROM THE FENWAY CLINIC AND TUFTS.
Because Judge Wolf was convinced that “sex reassignment surgery” is the “only form of adequate medical care” for an inmate who suffers from Gender Identity Disorder, he ruled that the state’s denial of it was in violation of the Constitution.

**THIS LEAVES US WITH THE “HOW.”**

How did we get to a place where our ‘moral deposit’ not only approves of surgically reversing one’s external sex organs, but enshrines it as a Constitutional right?

When we see highly qualified professionals and experts saying that Kosilek really IS a woman trapped in a man’s body and that this radical elective surgery is the only adequate treatment for him, have we not, as a society, embraced madness?

**HOW DO WE EXPLAIN THIS? HAVE WE SEEN THIS PATTERN BEFORE?**

"Michelle Kosilek," Boston Herald
“18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.”
Saint Paul describes in vivid terms the corporate foolishness and moral decay that comes as a result of turning away from God. In contrast, we see the foundation of true wisdom comes from knowing and obeying God’s Truth and design for humanity.

- Psalm 111:10
  “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.”

- Proverbs 1:7
  “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

When a culture stops fearing the Lord, it becomes unhinged, unanchored, and the result is eventually rampant and extreme sexual brokenness.

Is that what we’re seeing here? Is Judge Wolf’s embracing of ‘sex-reassignment surgery’ part of the “pattern of the world” that Paul mentions later in Chapter 12 of Romans?

- Romans 12:2
  “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—he good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The pattern of this world is to “suppress the Truth.” (Rom. 1:18)

The absence of God’s Truth is not ‘moral neutrality’; it is corporate insanity.
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Department of Correction appealed Judge Wolf’s decision.

In December of 2014, the Court of Appeals for the First Circuit overruled Judge Wolf. Kosilek’s final appeal was later rejected by the Supreme Court.

However, other courts have already used this decision from MA to make similar rulings in other cases of prisoners demanding sex-reassignment surgery.

Nearly 30 attorneys and advocacy groups filed briefs with the U.S. District Court supporting transgender sex change operations as a Constitutional right for prisoners. Massachusetts Family Institute was the ONLY group to file a brief in support of a traditional understanding of sexuality.

What does this mean for our culture and our laws?
What can we do?

What is the proper role of religion or faith in our government? Clearly, political involvement by people of faith is not the answer to all of our society’s problems. There are many things that simply cannot be fixed through laws or policies. **However, we must not abandon these areas and forfeit our opportunity to positively inform our government with God’s truth.**

Here is where we run up against the claim that we, “can’t legislate morality.”

**BUT:**

God’s design and laws for humanity apply to everyone - those who know Him AND those who do not.

The idea of public morality versus private morality creates a false and unhealthy duality and moral compartmentalism.

Our founding father John Adams said, “It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue.”

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**Christian principles apply even to the “secular world” because God’s word is:**

- **True**
  
  *(Proverbs 30:5)*

- **For all of creation**
  
  *(Ecclesiastes 12:13)*

- **Written on the hearts of man**
  
  *(Romans 2:15)*
IN OTHER WORDS...

To split the world into categories of “Christian” and “non-Christian” and reserve God’s moral truth only for those who are already confess Christ is to hide His light under a basket. We should view the “lost” more as the “not yet found” and seek to shine the light of God’s truth, all of it, into their lives as much as our own.

As important as it is for Christians to help shape the “moral deposit” of our society’s laws, that is not a panacea for the problems that surround us. Only God can truly renew minds, change hearts and save souls.

However, this is not an “either-or” proposition. We need a two-pronged approach. One way to think of balancing evangelism and political involvement is the imagery of sword and shield.

The Word of God is the “Sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17), our foundation of truth and an invitation to the world to come and follow the Savior. We as brothers and sisters in Christ pray in partnership with the Spirit that “His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” However, Christians must also use laws and public policy as a “shield” to protect believers’ ability to live out their faith and share it with others. We must be mindful that we live in a world where evil is real, yet our laws are intended to provide a shield of protection against the savage consequences of a broken world.
Regardless of where people are in their relationship to their Creator, we all swim in the same cultural waters and are all affected by its currents. When Christians serve as salt and light in law and politics, we can influence our government for good, causing it to fulfill its God-ordained role of restraining evil (Rom. 13:3). This in turn benefits us and our neighbors, the believer and the unbeliever alike.

Political involvement alone will not ultimately save a soul, but it can shield a mind or body from some of the destructive snares of sin. It can reduce the amount of brokenness our neighbors are likely to stumble through before they finally turn to God. Loving our neighbors must mean more than merely providing for their physical well-being. We should be good stewards of our laws and culture to help care for the moral well-being of our neighbors as well.

Some people may not want to get involved with what are called the “culture wars,” particularly when it often feels like we’re losing! However, there are dramatic consequences of not engaging in the realm of law and politics.

Some Christians argue we should, “stay out of politics.”

Even if we disagree with this and believe that there is a necessary and proper role for Christian influence on government, we may be told that it is not what Jesus would do; that the Son of God is much more concerned with things like “caring for widows and orphans.”

Again, these sentiments stem from a false dichotomy, an unbiblical compartmentalization of our lives and Christian duty.
Consider these two examples of where this shortsightedness would have kept Christians from being fully engaged in issues that ultimately impacted widows and orphans very much:

**Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS)** -

- In 2012, a proposed law allowing PAS in MA was placed on the statewide ballot as Question 2. It was ultimately defeated by a narrow margin, in large part due to churches working together to educate the electorate about the dangers, including a very slippery moral slope on the value of human life, that it would create.

- This issue will be discussed in detail in a subsequent lesson, but it is introduced here because one of the major concerns of those who fought legally and politically against PAS was the threat it posed to widows and widowers. Indeed, **a major concern of opponents was the potential for elder abuse** by heirs who could take advantage of the widows or widowers, in particular, to ‘expedite’ their inheritance and dramatically reduce the costs of end-of-life care by administering a lethal dose of pills.

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Already legal in Washington, Oregon, Montana and Vermont, **PAS is defined as:**

“suicide by a patient facilitated by means [as a drug prescription] or by information [as in indication of a lethal dosage] provided by a physician aware of the patient’s intent.”

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**SAME-SEX MARRIAGE -**

- Massachusetts was the first state in the nation where marriage was redefined to mean something other than the union of one man and one woman. This came about as the result of a 4-3 decision by the MA Supreme Judicial Court (highest state court) in 2003. (This issue will also be covered at length in a subsequent lesson.)

- Many Christians didn’t want to be seen as “mean” by opposing the desires of two people who love each other, and didn’t feel it threatened their own marriage to allow this innovation.

- However, as a result of the establishment of same-sex “marriage” in MA, the Catholic Church’s affiliated adoption agency was forced to close its doors rather than face law suits for “discrimination,” as the church could not in good conscience agree to place children with homosexual couples. Here you have gay marriage directly impacting orphans.
While the First Amendment to our US Constitution does not contain the oft-quoted term, “separation of church and state,” it does say the following: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…”

It is the “free exercise” clause that protects our right to preach, teach, pray, worship, evangelize, and engage in the full work of the gospel. However, not everyone in our society today values these freedoms. In fact, there are those who would greatly diminish them.

If we don’t use the “shield” of law and public policy to keep the door to the market place of ideas open for Christians to share and live their faith publicly, then the church will increasingly lose the ability to use the “sword” of the Word to reach the lost.
Wayne Grudem, author of *Politics According to the Bible*, asks “If Christians are silent about such moral and ethical issues, then where will moral standards come from?” If we don’t have a satisfactory answer to this question, than we must abandon the idea of ‘morally neutral’ laws. Grudem goes on to warn us as Christians about apathy in this realm, saying,

….if pastors and church members say, ‘I’m going to be silent about the moral and ethical issues that we face as a nation,’ that will leave a moral vacuum, and it will not be long until the ultimate adversaries of the Gospel – Satan and his demons – will rush in and influence every decision in a way contrary to Biblical standards. And if that happens, then governments around the world will increasingly use their tremendous power to silence the church.⁴

Grudem reflects the worldview that is simply, but dramatically, encapsulated in 1 John 5:19:

> “WE KNOW THAT WE ARE FROM GOD, AND THE WHOLE WORLD LIES IN THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE.”

If this is true, what ‘morality’ in law and policy can we expect from our government without our Christian influence?
Are the following legal and cultural developments really “morally neutral?” What impact do they have on our families, particularly our children?

**Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell** was the official policy of the U.S. Department of Defense from 1994, when it was instituted by then President Bill Clinton, until 2011. It prohibited specific sexual acts and statements about sexual behavior in order to preserve good order and discipline in our nation’s military. It did not ask people to reveal their thoughts or desires, it only required them to follow uniform standards of behavior.

In December of 2010, President Barack Obama called on a “lame-duck” Congress to repeal this law. Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown, succumbing to pressure from intense homosexual lobbying efforts, switched his position on this issue at the last minute and provided momentum in the Senate, allowing the repeal to pass.
CHILD PORNOGRAPHY PROTECTION ACT (CPPA) - This was passed by Congress in 1996 and prohibited “any visual depiction, including any photograph, film, video, picture, or computer generated image or picture [that] is, or appears to be, of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct…”

The “virtual child pornography” prohibited by this law included modified photographs of real children and non-minor teenagers made to look younger. This portion of the CPPA was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002 as a violation of the First Amendment freedom of speech.5

GAY-Straight Alliance (GSA) - 80% of MA schools have a GSA club.6 The mission of GSA is to: “create safe environments in schools for students to support each other and learn about homophobia, transphobia, and other oppressions, [and] educate the school community about homophobia, transphobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues…”7

“These things are a result of an “unsalted culture”
**Salt and Light**

We have a clear Biblical mandate to engage in civic debate. According to Jesus’ own words, we are to be salt and light to promote the Truth.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:13, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.”

We are not to bury the treasure of God’s Word and keep it just for ourselves. Promoting the truth of God’s Word is not just telling others about the Gospel message, but promoting the life-giving laws of God’s Word.

Consider what Saint Paul says in Colossians 4:5-6:

“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”
When Moses received God’s law for Israel, he understood the protection and providence that the law of God established. It was not offensive or suffocating, but life-giving and provided guidelines to a truly abundant life.

Consider Jesus’ words in Matthew 5: 14-16:

“YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY SET ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN. 15 NOR DO PEOPLE LIGHT A LAMP AND PUT IT UNDER A BASKET, BUT ON A STAND, AND IT GIVES LIGHT TO ALL IN THE HOUSE. 16 IN THE SAME WAY, LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.”

Typically, when we as Christians read this passage and think about being the salt of the earth and the light of the world we see this passage as being pleasant and affirming. This is particularly true just after having read verses 3 through 10 (Beatitudes). We think of providing for the poor, helping the needy, and being peacemakers. However, in verse 10-11 Christ tells us:

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN OTHERS REVILE YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU AND UTTER ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY ON MY ACCOUNT. 12 REJOICE AND BE GLAD, FOR YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN HEAVEN, FOR SO THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU.”
Does this happen by feeding the poor, helping the needy or being peace makers? Sometimes, but generally not, unless, of course, you share the Gospel and other biblical truths.

Consider Matthew 23: the Pharisees, Chief priests, and teachers of the law disliked, even despised, what Christ had to say, but he still said it. These were the leaders of the Jewish people. They could make laws and enforce them in as much as they did not conflict with Roman law. He was condemning them for the laws and rules that they put in place because their laws made it nearly impossible for the poor to comply with the sacrificial laws.

Consider when Jesus over-turned the tables of the money changers and declared that His Father’s House had become a den of thieves. In Acts, the Apostles as well as Paul encountered resistance on many occasions. Often times this involved confronting governmental authorities to account for their actions.
Being the salt of the earth and light of the world can sometimes be uplifting and encouraging such as when relief efforts help an area ravaged by some natural disaster.

Conversely, when salt is being applied to an open wound or when light is being turned on dark deeds, being the salt and light can be very difficult, even life threatening.

Salt stings in open wounds and light hurts eyes that are accustomed to darkness. But Christ still calls us to be salt of the earth and light of the world all the same. Sometimes that even means getting involved in civic discussions over policies and laws. Like doctors or nurses, we must apply these treatments gently, and with concern for the patient, but not withhold them.
It can be overwhelming to try and step into the emotionally charged and often hostile realm of law and politics. However, there are some simple things we can all do that make a difference, particularly in the aggregate.

1. **The first thing we can do is to pray for the men and women in our government.** The Apostle Paul urges us in First Timothy “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

2. **Vote. This is part of our duty as citizens to ‘render unto Caesar.’** Especially in local, state elections, every vote counts. This was literally the case in a 2011 race for the Sixth Worcester District State Representative seat that resulted in a tie vote. It was then resolved in a subsequent election by only 56 votes. It is easy to see how one person, and certainly an entire church, can make a difference.
3. **Make your vote an informed decision.**
Prior to elections, non-partisan voter guides are available at www.votevaluesma.com for most races in Massachusetts, from State Representative to Governor.

4. **Call or email your elected officials.**
In order to do their job of representing you, they have to hear from you. You can easily find out the name and contact information of your state representative or senator here: https://malegislature.gov/People/Search

5. **Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper.**
Christians should winsomely add salt and light to the discussion of moral issues.

Above all, prayerfully commit to being engaged as salt and light in our culture, particularly in the realms of law and politics. Lead with grace, but do not be afraid to speak the Truth.
Group Discussion Questions

1. Should ministers speak about controversial moral issues from the pulpit? Do you believe this is something that church leaders should do? Why or why not?

2. Should a church and/or a denomination have official positions on issues such as abortion, ‘same-sex marriage,’ or euthanasia? For example, both the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Southern Baptist Convention publish in-depth analyses of these issues and many others for their churches.

3. How should we respond to medical or scientific ‘experts’ who advocate for an understanding that seems to run completely counter to what the Bible teaches? For example, the doctors who testified that Robert Kosilek should have a sex-change operation. (pg. 7)

4. What Biblical insights are involved as we discuss the public funding for sex-change operations?

5. Do the laws of our Commonwealth or our nation reflect your “moral life?” Should they? What did Justice Holmes have to say about this? (pg. 2)

6. Do you believe the cultural pattern of turning away from God and embracing sexual brokenness outlined by Saint Paul in Romans 1 (pg. 9) is what we are seeing in our culture now?
7. What sticks out to you in regards to the Biblical examples of Christian civic stewardship?

8. What is the Biblical understanding of the overlap between issues of morality and law?

9. Where have our laws come from historically?

10. Are there examples of non-Christians imposing their morality on everyone else through the law?

11. Would our laws be better or worse in the absence of any Christian influence?


13. How are children especially vulnerable to an unsalted culture? Is there value in using the political and legal process to help shape a better moral environment for them? How?

14. Have any of these issues directly impacted your life? Do you have friends, relatives or coworkers who, for example, have gone through an abortion or struggle with same-sex attraction? How can we best minister to them?

15. How can we be salt and light in law and culture?