



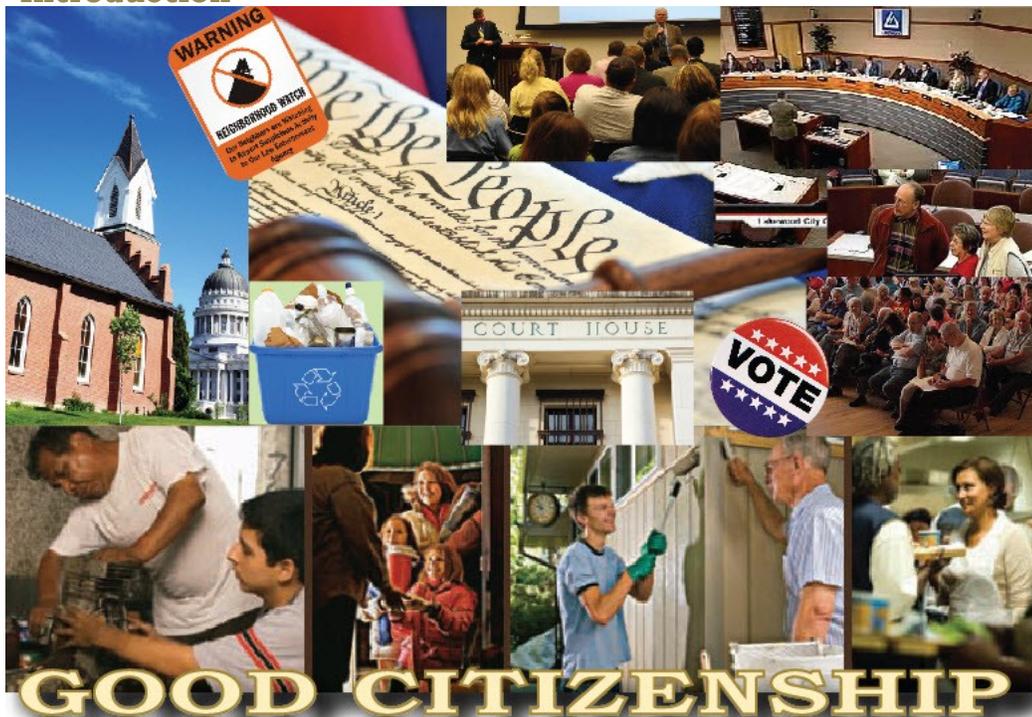
DOCTRINE & COVENANTS

& CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

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Lesson #44: *Being Good Citizens* (D&C 58:21–22, 26–28; 98:4–10; 134; Articles of Faith 1:12; Our Heritage, pp. 133–34)

Introduction



GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Church leaders have encouraged us to be good citizens and to strengthen our communities and nations. There are many ways to be good citizens. These include participating in government or political processes, obeying the law, and serving in our communities. This lesson discusses the Lord’s teachings regarding government and good citizenship.

Participating in government

In August 1835, a general assembly of the Church at Kirtland, Ohio, unanimously approved a declaration of beliefs about government. This declaration is recorded in D&C 134.

D&C 134:1, 6-8, and 11 list the purposes of civil governments:

- “For the good and safety of society” (134:1)
- “For the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty” (134:6)
- “For the protection of all citizens in the free exercise of their religious belief” (134:7)
- “For the redress of all wrongs and grievances” (134:11)

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve: “As Church members, we live under the banner of many different flags. How

important it is that we understand our place and our position in the lands in which we live! We should be familiar with the history, heritage, and laws of the lands that govern us. In those countries that allow us the right to participate in the affairs of government, we should use our free agency and be actively engaged in supporting and defending the principles of truth, right, and freedom” (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 72).

D&C 134 teaches that we as members have a special responsibility to seek after and support leaders who “Administer the law in equity and justice” (134:3). Further counsel comes in **D&C 98:10** that we should look for honesty and wisdom in civic leaders. It is up to us to take this seriously and prepare ourselves to choose wisely as we participate in political selection processes or go to the polls.

Lesson Highlights

- Participating in government
- Obeying the laws of the land
- Strengthening the community

A study of this lesson will encourage us to be good citizens by participating in government, obeying the law, and strengthening the community.

Next Week

#45 “The Family Is Ordained of God” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”)



As we participate in government and political processes, we should do so with the understanding that *“the Church is politically neutral. It does not endorse political parties, platforms, or candidates. Candidates should not imply that they are endorsed by the Church or its leaders.”*

Obeying the laws of the land

We find instruction in **D&C 58:21-22; 98:4-6; 134:5-6; Articles of Faith 1:12** regarding our responsibility to obey the laws of the land.

- Obey the laws—there is no need to break them—and be subject to the lawful powers
- Constitutional law is justifiable before the Lord. It maintains rights and privileges, so we are justified in *“befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land”*.
- We are bound to support governments which protect our rights through the laws they enact. The governments have the right to enact laws which secure the public interest while holding sacred the freedom of conscience. We owe respect and deference to the laws (which provide

Strengthening the community

From the **Church Handbook of Instructions**: *“Members should do their civic duty by supporting measures that strengthen society morally, economically, and culturally. Members are urged to be actively engaged in worthy causes to improve their communities and make them wholesome places in which to live and rear families”* (Book 2, page 325).

Serve Others

Participate in community service projects and invite others in the Church to join you in those projects. If you are aware of a worthy project that needs support, inform appropriate ward leaders (quorum leaders, YW Presidency /advisors, Relief Society Presidency, etc.) of the need and the opportunity to see if they and their group would be interested in supporting the activity. Through personal and group support, the community benefits from our service(s). We too are blessed in many ways by serving others.

Serve in elected or appointed public service positions

The First Presidency has counseled us: *“We strongly urge men and women to be willing to serve on school boards, city and county councils and commissions, state legislatures, and other high offices of either election or appointment”* (First Presidency letter, 15 Jan. 1998).

Good people in such positions are able to be an influence for good upon many in the community.

Church leaders and members should avoid any statements or conduct that might be interpreted as Church endorsement of political parties or candidates” (Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders [1998], 325).

peace and harmony). Laws are instituted to regulate our interests as individuals and nations.

- *“We believe... in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law”*.

It is also a sacred responsibility to teach our children their responsibilities toward the civil laws and its associated institutions.

It is our responsibility to actively seek, support, select, and honor law enforcement and other civil officers in the performance of their duties.

The relationship between church and state should be in accordance with the teachings of **D&C 134:4, 9**. The state should not impose laws upon religion unless religious exercise infringes upon the rights and liberties of others.

Support worthy causes or activities

D&C 58:27 urges us to be “anxiously engaged” in good causes by taking individual responsibility for things that need to be done.

This account of one LDS sister’s contribution and its impact: *“While Dolina Smith was serving as Young Women president in the Toronto Ontario Stake in 1986, she asked an expert to speak at a fireside about the growing problem of pornography. Later she became involved with a nationwide group called Canadians for Decency, which mobilizes thousands of anti-pornography Canadians to contact their elected officials as specific concerns about pornography arise... In 1990 her involvement increased when she was named chairperson of Canadians for Decency. In this new role she has given numerous presentations before the provincial and federal governing bodies that make and change pornography laws. She has also spoken to many groups of citizens who work with local governments to clamp down on the spread of pornography in their communities”* (Donald S. Conkey, *“Together We Can Make a Difference”*, Ensign, Feb. 1996, 68).

As Latter-day Saints, we are expected to find worthy causes that we can support locally. It is up to us to make our communities better by fighting evil influences that would otherwise prevail.

As Latter-day Saints we should be good citizens regardless of where we live. We should do what we can to support good government and strengthen our communities.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- What are some community service projects that you have participated in?
- What can you do to be a good citizen?

