

The Third Leg: Orthopraxy ("Right Action")

Total Time: 11-16 min

OPENING | 2 min



Read the following aloud.

Political discipleship and faithful civic engagement are vital components to our walks with God. Cultivation of our hearts and minds to place our politics under Jesus is not a niche, accessory, or optional theology but is part of reflecting the kingdom of God. As we saw in Colossians 1, all kingdoms, powers, thrones, and governments are beneath Our Lord and Savior. The implications of this are boundless as we actively submit our feelings and thoughts to that loving abundance, particularly when it comes to the institutions that govern the world. This is especially true when we consider the last leg of our stool—*orthopraxy*.

Orthopraxy derived from the Greek means "correct practice" or "right action." It is often contrasted with *orthodoxy* ("right thinking") in dominant Christian culture. In Christ, we see that these are not in competition with one another but essential compliments to a full life with God. This is especially true when it comes to politics.

James 1:22-25 (NRSVue) says:

"²²But be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on going away,

immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵ *But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.*

As James indicates, we don't want to just feel the right things, or just think the right things—we want to put them into practice! How to do this will vary, so it's worth discussing in our Christian communities.

DISCUSSION | 5-10 min

Break into pairs, small groups or remain as a whole group depending on your context and discuss the following questions together.

- Reflect on your family, friends, and faith community. When you think of orthopathy (heart), orthodoxy (head), and orthopraxy (hands), which one do you think is most preferred in your context?
- As you consider orthopraxy—doing what God commands—what are some ways you might be able to live this out in the realm of civic engagement?
- What barriers might arise for you as you attempt to faithfully take right action in obedience to Jesus?

PRAY | 2 min

Reflect on the words from this passage in James and spend time in silent prayer. Ask God to reveal the places within you where there is hypocrisy, inaction, or perhaps an over-reliance on action at the expense of thinking or feeling. Confess, individually and collectively, where you have fallen short and ask Our Messiah to save you and Our Rabbi to show you a better way.

CONCLUSION | 2 min

Closing Thought

Read and reflect as a group on the following excerpt from C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters. This is an excerpt from a fictional "demon" Screwtape who is instructing his pupil Wormwood how to deceive a Christian in the realm of politics:

"Let him begin by treating Patriotism...as part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important. Then quietly and gradually, nurse him to the state at which the religion becomes

merely a part of the 'cause,' in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce. Once he has made the world an end and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing.” -Screwtape Letters, Chapter 7

This passage highlights what a profound temptation it is to use our faith in Christ to turn our personal opinions and preferences into core convictions and remake the world as we would have it to be. This posture places our thoughts, actions, and feelings over Christ and puts us on the judgment seat instead of Jesus, who has the supremacy. Jesus is Lord and we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, living an abundant life with Him; and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. And this includes the systems and structures that govern our everyday lives. Through sincere engagement with Jesus as Lord over our individual and collective orthopathy, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy, we can wrestle faithfully with what it means to participate in the political processes of this world as citizens of nations and children of God with Christ as King.

Thank you for completing these training sessions! We pray that the content and conversations encouraged you, challenged you, and brought you and your group closer to one another and Our Lord Jesus.

*Scan the QR code for more resources
on God's Good News About Politics*

