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The Death Penalty from a Christian Worldview  
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## The Death Penalty from a Christian Worldview

The death penalty is a widely debated subject within the United States. It is important as Christians to consider a biblical standpoint when faced with these thought-provoking questions. With this being said, Romans became my first point of reference. Romans is particularly about how we as humans are born into sin, yet Jesus sent his son to set us free. Romans 12:17-19 reads, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:23 states, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>2</sup> These verses could be applicable to the questions of the death penalty. There is substantial evidence shown when comparing case law to organizations' thoughts and amendment rights, as well as taking a biblical worldview to support the abolishment of the death penalty. I feel the death penalty is in opposition to what God calls us as Christians to do. Christianity tells us to be of discipleship, no matter a person's background. Why allow Satan to gain another before us as Christians have taken the chance to share the gospel of Jesus Christ?

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 12:17-19

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 6:23

## Prayer

Lord, as we come together in a discussion of the death penalty, we pray you to open our hearts to what you say to be true. I pray this research exemplifies you and the work you do. I pray your word on this topic moves others and pulls on their heart as it has done mine. We thank you for your word, so that we may better know how to serve you. You call us to serve others and love as you have continuously loved us. In Philippians, you tell us not to be anxious but to come to you in prayer and thanks for everything.<sup>3</sup> We pray for hearts and minds to be opened to your word as we dive into this topic. We pray for your presence in our hearts and confidence in knowing we are doing as you have called. Matthew 18:20 says, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”<sup>4</sup> With that, Lord, we pray your presence and love fills our hearts. Lord, we thank you for the love and grace you continue to show us. In your great name, we pray, Amen.

## Introduction

In reference to the topic at hand, this research will reflect a Christian worldview, hoping to uncover the biblical perspective of the death penalty. As we do this, it is essential to consider both the Old Testament and the New Testament. To begin, I feel it is important to remind ourselves of the ways Jesus has shown grace to those throughout the bible. In the book of Luke, there was a woman who bled for twelve years, and no one could cure her. One day, she saw Jesus and reached for his clothing. She believed in her heart that if she touched him, she would be cured, and she was. Another example is from the book of John, a blind beggar, as he was referenced. This man had been blind since birth. Jesus healed this man with mud he had formed and rubbed on the man’s eyes. The man was healed. Imagine being blind your entire life, and the first time you have ever opened your eyes, you see Jesus. The man who has saved you from all pain and suffering. Jesus saw both of these people suffering, and he healed them because they had faith and trust in what Jesus could do and did. Jesus did the same for us when he died on the cross for each of our sins.

We choose to be baptized in his name and accept him into our lives, to have a relationship with him and bring others to do the same. We were all tasked the same, and that is to go make disciples of all nations and baptize them so that they could spend eternal life with the one who saves all. As we consider the pain and suffering the victims of horrible crimes, have experienced and continue to endure, we must be there to remind them of who is walking through the fire with them. I think it is important that we remind them who is ultimately in control. Who sees their pain and suffering, and who will be with them every second of it. Who are we to decide who gets to die? We have all sinned, each and every day. We baptize many every Sunday, but we don’t ask for a resume of sins before to see if their sins were too great; we happily baptize. Each of us comes with a resume, but Jesus is only looking for that letter of recommendation from your salvation, and your faith for you to get into heaven. What is on that resume is not your deciding factor; it is the relationship you have built with Christ Jesus that will grant you your place next to him in heaven for all eternity. He has forgiven all sins and wiped us clean.

There is a story that I have applied to my life for a while now; it is about Jesus’ Hebrew name, ‘YHWH’. Over time, we added the vowels to the name, showing it as “Yahweh”. The letters YHWH represents breathing sounds. YH is considered to be the inhale, while WH is

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<sup>3</sup> Phil. 4:6

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 18:20

considered to be the exhale. Therefore, each of us unknowingly says his name every second of the day, praising his name. Children, adults, those of other religions, atheists, and both low-risk and high-risk offenders, speak his name. When we feel overwhelmed and exhausted, our cries speak his name. Simply the breath in our lungs is the presence of the Lord in our hearts. That shows the beautifulness of Jesus, and how much he truly loves each and every one of us. God needs and deserves to be greatly glorified.

Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”<sup>5</sup> As we continue to look through both the Old Testament and the New Testament, it is important that we also consider some of the many other factors regarding the death penalty. These factors include the violation of rights, statistics, the Old Testament, New Testament, both Testaments as an overlook, biblical aspects of our country, and alternatives. Consider the following research in support of the previous statements.

### **Violation of Rights**

It is important for us to consider the rights we are stripping from those we are sentencing to death. There are two amendments that we should analyze when asking ourselves if the death penalty is a violation of basic human rights. Both the eighth and fourteenth amendments appear to have been in violation with those sentenced to death. Our eighth amendment says, “Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.”<sup>6</sup> There are multiple instances in which those on death row have been wrongly convicted of crimes, or sentenced to death for a crime that is not violent enough to receive a death sentence. There are also instances where wrongful convictions have caused people to do placed on death row. These reasons include but are not limited to wrongful eyewitness placing or pressured confessions.<sup>7</sup> With this being said, “for every eight people executed, one person on death row has been exonerated.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the eighth amendment, the death penalty appears to violate our fourteenth amendment as well. Under this amendment, any citizen of the United States is in protection from any state enforcing laws that would discredit our amendment rights as citizens.<sup>9</sup> When we look at the fourteenth amendment after taking into consideration the guidelines of the eighth amendment, we can see how the two go hand in hand. As the fourteenth protects us from the state stripping away our amendment rights, it prohibits the state from imposing cruel and unusual punishment under the eighth amendment. Yet, we allow our government to enforce cruel and unusual punishments, such as the death penalty.

When sentenced to death row, there is not much of a time frame given. Those sentenced to death row in the United States are usually spending a decade or more, either waiting for their date of execution or for the court to overturn their sentence to death.<sup>10</sup> In knowing this, I feel we fail to recognize how inhumane allowing this to happen can be. We are so quick to take the hurt and anger we feel towards those who have committed these violent crimes and produce a quick

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<sup>5</sup> Prov. 27:17

<sup>6</sup> “Eighth Amendment,” Constitution Annotated, Accessed February 16, 2023, <https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/amendment-8/>

<sup>7</sup> “Death Penalty,” EJI, February 15, 2023. <https://eji.org/issues/death-penalty/>

<sup>8</sup> EJI, “Death Penalty”

<sup>9</sup> “Fourteenth Amendment,” Constitution Annotated, Accessed February 16, 2023, <https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/amendment-14/>

<sup>10</sup> “Time on Death Row,” Death Penalty Information Center, Accessed February 13, 2023, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/death-row/death-row-time-on-death-row>

decision on how we should punish, without considering our beliefs and the other factors that come into play. Matthew 5:41 says, “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”<sup>11</sup> In reference to this verse, Ken Gosnell says, “Jesus gives this principle to his followers as a way for them to separate themselves from the culture in which they were living for the purpose of helping others to see Him more clearly.”<sup>12</sup> As Christians, it is important we try to see people as God sees them. Everyone deserves mercy, grace, and forgiveness. After all, Jesus died on the cross for each of our sins, regardless of our backgrounds, so we could spend eternity with him in heaven.

In knowing the circumstances listed, we must ask ourselves what we truly believe is right. The underlying question being presented regarding these presumptions is if we should continue to allow the death penalty to be an option, knowing the many flaws it has and the ways it previously and continuously violates basic human rights. The question we need to ask ourselves is if we should consider this to be a gross miscarriage of justice.

### Statistics

It appears the government does not appreciate the value of statistical data and applies it to its decisions. Through the Death Penalty Information Center, a fact sheet was released, giving multiple areas where data has been collected to show both the diversity and negativity of the death penalty. The DPIC did a study on those who have been executed as a result of a crime of interracial murder. They show that twenty-one white defendants have been executed because of murdering a black victim, and three hundred and three black defendants have been executed as the result of murdering a white victim.<sup>13</sup> There is a major difference between white defendants who have been executed versus black defendants. It leaves room for us to wonder if the death penalty is potentially racially founded. As Christians, it is important that we take this into account. In James 2, we see where God tells us that we are not to exhibit partiality and that if we do, we are sinning. This is because the root of partiality is selfishness, and partiality should not be in the life of a believer. By the shown statistic in white versus black defendants, it is evident that there is some partiality built into the foundations of the death penalty. These racial factors also bring up a question of equal protection, which we are all granted under the equal protection clause in our Constitution. Genesis 1:27 says, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.”<sup>14</sup> In this verse, we see that God says we are handcrafted and individually made in the image of him. He specifically states both female and male. Included in the statement ‘both female and male’, is every race. We were each made to represent him and his love.

Aside from the racial findings regarding the negativity of the death penalty, there are many others who feel the death penalty is not efficient. In consideration of the following fact, keep in mind that these police chiefs are not said to associate with any specific religion. “A 2009 poll commissioned by DPIC found police chiefs ranked the death penalty last among ways to reduce violent crime. The police chiefs also considered the death penalty the least efficient use of taxpayers’ money.”<sup>15</sup> These hardworking individuals have a challenging job; after all, those who

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<sup>11</sup> Matt. 5:41

<sup>12</sup> Ken Gosnell, “Develop a Second Mile Mentality- Biblical Principles to Build a Business,” LinkedIn, December 28, 2017, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/develop-second-mile-mentality-biblical-principles-build-gosnell/>

<sup>13</sup> “Facts About the Death Penalty,” Death Penalty Information Center, PDF file, Updated on February 9, 2023, <https://documents.deathpenaltyinfo.org/pdf/FactSheet.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Gen. 1:27

<sup>15</sup> Death Penalty Information Center, “Facts About the Death Penalty,” Pg. 4

may be on death row could have been on their radar. In making decisions on whether we should allow the death penalty, taking into consideration those who handle these offenders firsthand should be important. The Federal Bureau of Prisons spent close to \$4.7 million on the first five executions implemented by the Trump Administration over the course of July and August 2020.<sup>16</sup> This record by the Federal Bureau of Prisons effectively shows how expensive execution truly is.

In support of both the police chiefs and the Federal Bureau of Prison's statements, there are many others that collect statistical data to effectively show the faults of the death penalty. The EJI states, "The death penalty in America is a flawed, expensive policy, defined by bias and error."<sup>17</sup> The death penalty is not a practical form of crime control.

Another statistic released by the Death Penalty Information Center was whether executing offenders lowers the homicide rates. According to their findings, eighty-eight percent said no, five percent said yes, and seven percent had no opinion.<sup>18</sup> In knowing these facts, an eighty-eight percent statistic shows that these executions are not solving the issue at hand; we are still allowing the death penalty to have a hold on our system.

### **Old Testament**

Throughout the Old Testament, we can see there are a number of crimes that were punishable by death. These include but are not limited to murder, adultery, kidnapping, and blasphemy. An important thing to remember is that God forgives. Regardless of if you go to jail or are sentenced to death row for a heinous crime, he forgives you.

In the book of Exodus, there is a story about Moses committing murder. This is found in Exodus 2:11-14; the story is as follows, "One day after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?" The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."<sup>19</sup> At this point, I feel Moses has felt convicted for what he had done. Those who commit these violent crimes often do it for power. This is why I feel Moses may have felt the conviction after the man asked him who he was to judge him after what he had done himself. I feel this is very applicable to our everyday lives. We are all guilty of judging others, not considering what we have done ourselves. We have each fallen short of the glory of God, yet we allow ourselves to sit in judgment over what others have chosen to do.

Later in Exodus 3, we see where God has called upon Moses to the burning bush. Moses was told to remove his sandals as the place he was standing was sacred ground. "The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned of their suffering."<sup>20</sup> This verse shows us that God recognizes our pain and suffering and sends people or things in our lives to retrieve us of such

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<sup>16</sup> "Records Disclose Taxpayers Picked Up a Nearly Million Dollar Price Tag for Each Federal Execution," Death Penalty Information Center, February 3, 2021, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/news/records-disclose-taxpayers-picked-up-a-nearly-million-dollar-price-tag-for-each-federal-execution>

<sup>17</sup> EJI, "Death Penalty"

<sup>18</sup> Death Penalty Information Center, "Facts About the Death Penalty," Pg. 3

<sup>19</sup> Exod. 2:11-14

<sup>20</sup> Exod. 3:7

things. “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you; When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”<sup>21</sup> Through this verse, we see how God has forgiven Moses for his previous sins. God called Moses to serve others and save them from their pain and suffering.

Genesis 9:6 says, “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.”<sup>22</sup> From this, we can see that God may approve of the death penalty under certain circumstances. We must consider the New Testament foundations before we decide on whether the death penalty is biblical.

### **New Testament**

The book of Matthew is the first book of the New Testament. This gospel gives us a lot of insight as to what God calls for us and the guidelines we are to place on our lives. The topics throughout this book include, but are not limited to, an eye for an eye, love for enemies, oaths, prayer, and divorce. The topic I feel falls closely with the death penalty is an eye for an eye. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them and the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you and does not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”<sup>23</sup> In this passage, we can see where Jesus has called us to forgive and continue to serve others, regardless of the pain we have experienced from them. In applying this to the death penalty, I feel it is good to punish as they did commit a crime. However, I do not believe we should execute them, as Jesus calls us to lend others the shirt off our backs, and that we are not to resist an evil person. If we choose to execute these people, I feel it is contrary to what the Gospel of Matthew is telling us.

Another topic covered in the book of Matthew is ‘Love for Enemies’. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”<sup>24</sup> God tells us in the passage that no matter the person's sin, he still chooses to allow the sun to rise for them. He continues to choose them; he still sends his son to die on the cross for them. His nail-scarred hands reached out and wiped each of our sins away. Jesus shows us he loves us each and every day by allowing us to open our eyes every morning. He does this for you and me, and he does this for those who are locked up for offenses, whether they are high-risk or low risk. He continuously reaches out to us in hopes of drawing us closer to him and spending eternity with the one who created all things.

Romans 12:19 states, “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”<sup>25</sup> We should not allow ourselves and our government to decide who dies and who does not die. We place people in prison for committing murder as they are not the ones to decide who gets to end someone’s

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<sup>21</sup> Exod. 3:10-12

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 9:6

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 5:38-42

<sup>24</sup> Matt: 5:33-35

<sup>25</sup> Rom. 12:19

life. We contradict ourselves when we then sentence them to death and decide their last day. We inform them of their wrongs, yet we become hypocrites when we act in the same manner they did. Some may argue intent. Murders do tend to act with intent, but by enforcing the death penalty, we are intending to end their life. In verses twenty and twenty-one, God then says, “On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”<sup>26</sup> In consideration of this verse, the death penalty would be in violation of how God has called us to respond. He asks that we treat those of evil with goodness. I believe God has called us to do this, as it would best represent him. God didn’t repay us evil for our evil sins. Instead, he sent his son to be crucified on the cross for us. God repaid our evil with good. As we were made in the likeness of God, we should act with the same intentions that God did for us.

Another verse I believe is applicable would be in 1 Corinthians. I have commonly heard it as the ‘love verse’. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a states, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud. It does not dishonor others; it is not self-seeking; it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.”<sup>27</sup> There is so much to be taken from this verse. Many times, throughout the Bible, God asks us to love one another.

### **The Old Testament and The New Testament**

In correlation to both the Old and the New Testament examples listed, we can see that both men could have been punished by death, yet they weren’t. Instead, God called them to do great things. God has and continues to prove that he can make a disciple of anyone, throughout many instances in the bible. God does this regardless of the person's circumstances, environment, or background. In Isaiah 45:7, God says, “I form the light and create darkness; I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.”<sup>28</sup> He is the ultimate creator with the ultimate decision. Who are we to decide the fate of others when he is the one in control?

Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”<sup>29</sup> This verse has been applied to a murder case before, back in December of 2019. This case is truly mind-blowing and does so well at representing God and how he asks that we exemplify him. An article released by CNN News, mentions a case where a man forgives a woman for killing his brother. This man is Brandt Jean. CNN reports Brandt Jean’s words as is, “I want them to discard this thing from their minds that ... certain people are supposed to act a certain way. I want people to have the heart that God has. This may have just been about God and what God would want me to do in this situation, without even looking at race.”<sup>30</sup> Forgiveness is so powerful and sets you free. We know this by Matthew 6:15, “But if you do not forgive your sins.”<sup>31</sup>

1 Thessalonians 5:15 says, “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strives to do what is good for each other and everyone else.”<sup>32</sup> Per God’s word, through

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<sup>26</sup> Rom. 12:20-21

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor. 13:4-8a.

<sup>28</sup> Isa. 45:7

<sup>29</sup> Eph. 4:32

<sup>30</sup> “His hug of forgiveness shocked the country. Yet he still won’t watch the video from that moment,” CNN, December 8, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/06/us/brandt-jean-botham-jean-forgiveness/index.html>

<sup>31</sup> Matt. 6:15

<sup>32</sup> 1 Thess. 5:15



each verse in the New Testament, there is good reason to believe the death penalty is not biblical. The death penalty appears to violate not only basic human rights, but the biblical teachings and foundations God has laid for our lives.

Lastly, Jeremiah 29:11 states, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”<sup>33</sup> God has a plan for each of our lives that he has thoroughly planned out and put into play. Why do we question that, and why do we question his word? Each of us has our own unique interpretations of God’s word. This is good as iron sharpens iron. We are to learn from each other and gather with those who follow the same religion as we will learn from each other. We are also called to reach others so they can do the same. Why allow the world to end when there are still people who have not yet heard the gospel?

### **Alternatives**

With the above research regarding the Old Testament and the New Testament, I feel it is now appropriate to consider the alternatives to the death penalty. If we as Christians do find the death penalty not to be biblically sound, we must take into consideration our alternative and its factors. The alternative to the death penalty would be life in prison without the chance of parole. These individuals are high-risk offenders, so it would be smart to place them on a separate wing from the others, as well as have staff who are specifically trained to handle these high-risk offenders.

Offering programs for these individuals may be a good way to help, for example, the prison ministry. Prison ministry could be an effective way to reach these individuals and bring them to the Lord. In doing so, could decrease the recidivism rate. This could be used with both low-risk and high-risk individuals; there is no fine print saying whom you may or may not minister to. This would allow for taxpayers’ money to be spread throughout the jail system in a variety of ways, rather than for a good chunk of it to go to one execution. This would allow for more employment opportunities as well, as we would need individuals specialized and trained in dealing with these high-risk individuals. It would also open up a pool of room for us as Christians to spread the gospel.

The Freedom in Jesus Prison Ministries does well at exemplifying how God has called up to be of discipleship. On their website, they include a small bible passage that is beyond applicable to these ideas. Matthew 15:34-40. This verse talks about how God provides. Verse thirty-five and thirty-six says, “For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in, I needed clothes, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you looked after me, I was in prison, and you came to visit me.”<sup>34</sup> This Bible verse shows how merciful and loving our God truly is. As Christians, we are called to walk this same path, If we see of someone hurting or struggling, we are to be there to help and guide them to open their hearts to God and allow him to provide.

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<sup>33</sup> Jer. 29:11

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 15:35-40

## Biblical Aspects of our Country

There are many aspects of our judicial system that are formed from the Bible. “Biblical references to the word ‘justice’ mean ‘to make a right.’”<sup>35</sup> The point of our court systems is to bring justice to those who are in need of being compensated or to bring some form of peace to those who have been involved in some way in a criminal case. This could be to those in the surrounding community, knowing that person will be locked up, or to the family of a possible victim. From a spiritual point of view, justice means loving our neighbor as we love ourselves and is rooted in the character and nature of God. As God is just and loving, so we are called to justice and live in love.”<sup>36</sup> There are many things in our country that we have God as the foundation of. This includes our pledge of allegiance and the commonly known song ‘God Bless America. Each of these things was implemented for the use of respecting our country and the foundation it is built on. No matter who it is, or what denomination, we each have recited one, if not both, of these respectable lyrics. At which, we all mention God’s name numerous times.

In the pledge of allegiance, we say, ‘One nation, under God...’. The pledge of allegiance did not always incorporate the statement, ‘under God’. It wasn’t until the year of 1954.<sup>37</sup> One of our founding fathers gave an explanation as to why we need to be one nation under God. “Our freedom comes from God, and the government was established to protect that God-given freedom.”<sup>38</sup> Thomas Jefferson then goes on to say, “No king or emperor, no president or congress, no court or crowd gives us our rights. They come from God himself and are unalienable. And the Founders built America’s ‘foundation on such principles’”.<sup>39</sup>

The commonly known song, ‘God Bless America’, is sung in support of our country, in the times of World War I. This song was said to be a declaration of appreciation for what our country has done for its citizens and for the true meaning of a home.”<sup>40</sup> By saying, ‘God Bless America’, we are not only thanking God for his blessings on our nation but asking for continuous blessings upon our country.

We also enter in a biblical realm in our courtrooms, as we swear witnesses in on the bible. You are asked to swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth. When doing so, you are placing your hand on the Bible. Witnesses used to face no consequence for perjury up until the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. Beforehand, using this way of swearing in was believed that God’s vengeance was plenty to get a witness to tell the whole truth.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “What does social justice really mean?,” World Vision, February 20, 2012, <https://www.worldvision.org/blog/social-justice-really-mean#:~:text=From%20a%20scriptural%20point%20of%20view%2C%20justice%20means%20loving%20our,justice%20and%20live%20in%20love.>

<sup>36</sup> World Vision, “What does social justice really mean?”

<sup>37</sup> “The Pledge of Allegiance,” Historic Documents, July 4, 1995, <https://www.ushistory.org/documents/pledge.htm#:~:text=In%201954%2C%20in%20response%20to,word%20pledge%20we%20say%20today.>

<sup>38</sup> “Why ‘Under God’ Must Remain In The Pledge Of Allegiance,” Gateways, 2016, <https://gogateways.org/articles/2018/1/31/why-under-god-must-remain-in-the-pledge-of-allegiance>

<sup>39</sup> Gateways, “Why ‘Under God’ Must Remain In The Pledge Of Allegiance”

<sup>40</sup> “God Bless America: The Story Behind The Song,” The Kennedy Center, September 17, 2019, <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/music/story-behind-the-song/the-story-behind-the-song/god-bless-america/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CIt's%20not%20a%20patriotic%20song,anthem%20of%20the%20United%20States.>

<sup>41</sup> “Where Did We Get Our Oath?,” Slate, April 20, 2004, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2004/04/how-the-courtroom-got-its-oath.html#:~:text=Prior%20to%20that%2C%20it%20was,into%20telling%20the%20unvarnished%20truth.&text=The%20earliest%20English%20settlers%20in,oath%20in%20a%201787%20essay.>

In knowing this information, it is evident that many know who God the creator is. I feel some choose to search for the gaps in these areas as they are fighting to live for themselves and not for the one who created them. Our justice system, among many other aspects of our country, bases its works on the foundation of God, but only where they choose to allow it room. Schools do not allow the preaching of any sort, yet we are expected to recite the pledge of allegiance every morning. As for the song, ‘God Bless America’, we sing it over time; we are honoring those who have died serving the country, or at major sporting events. In court, they are adamant about using the Bible to swear witnesses it, yet their decision-making is not based on the word of God.

The justice system disregards any word of God that does not align with their personal feelings or beliefs. Throughout this study of the Old Testament and the New Testament, we see the many things God has called of us, yet our government does not comply with those commands. Governmental standards are rarely shifted unless it is in the majority of the public’s interest or for the attention of the media. In doing so, it creates a mass of confusion across the nation. This is where people question who God truly is or who we, as Christians, say he is. This is where our role comes into play. We are to stand up for what we believe, in and support the one who created us as he supports us each and every day.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I feel there is substantial evidence throughout each factor covered in this research to support the abolishment of the death penalty. God uses things in our everyday lives to relay messages to us, as he has done with me in presenting this research. He uses our talents and everyday routines to relay the gospel not only to others but to ourselves. It is so amazing to see God moving, and throughout the course of writing this paper, he has made it evident that he is moving and has his hand on each of us.

An example of how God uses our everyday factors to relay messages would be through music. There are a number of Christian artists who have written songs in hopes of relaying the goodness of our God. A song I feel best represents this, and relates to the at hand would be, “God of Revival”, by Phil Wickham. One of the verses in his song stuck out to me in relation to those in prison or possibly on death row. Phil Wickham says, “There’s no prison wall you can’t break through”, then continues to say, “all things are possible”.<sup>42</sup> Wickham’s song does well at representing the true power of God. While it is important to pay attention to the messages God sends us through other various forms, such as music, it is essential that we also seek answers from our primary source, the Bible.

Matthew 28:19-20 states, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them, to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”<sup>43</sup> As this verse asks that we go and make disciples of all nations, it does not specify guidelines as to a specific location or limitations on whom we can share it with. As said in the verse above, Christianity tells us to be of discipleship, no matter a person’s background. Why allow Satan to gain another before us as Christians have taken the chance to share the gospel of Jesus Christ? If we as Christians choose to support the death penalty, the parting question would

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<sup>42</sup> “God of Revival,” Lyrics, Phil Wickham, October 23, 2022, <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Phil-Wickham/God-of-Revival>

<sup>43</sup> Matt. 28:19-20

be, are we in opposition to what God is calling us to do? After all, “Public Policy with unjust results is not God-ordained.”<sup>44</sup>

### Closing

Throughout researching the death penalty and all the factors that go into it, there is a lot most of us don't realize. The research of this paper was a major learning experience for me. This can be an extremely touchy topic, especially when it comes to making a decision according to your faith. There are many instances throughout this research in which I have felt challenged both personally and spiritually. It is difficult to sit in class or at home and hear fellow classmates, or family members debate this topic. It can be hard to share what you believe for fear of either being wrong or being looked upon differently. The death penalty has been debated a lot recently between family members and me, as well as times in a classroom setting. I feel this is another thing that truly motivated me to do more research into God's word.

Beginning this research was extremely difficult. I had always felt so strongly about the death penalty and always felt that God was asking me to do my research on it and share it with others. Although I had never understood this, I prayed endlessly for the wisdom and strength to complete this research. Over the course of writing this paper, I couldn't bring myself to feel as if I was doing the right thing. I felt as if I wasn't saying the things God called me to, but that I was speaking purely from my own feelings. I also allowed thoughts to take over, as I feared I wasn't speaking the truth about what God says. There was a feeling I couldn't shake, nor could I explain. It wasn't until I recognized I had allowed Satan to move me into a state of doubt and fear that I could begin writing my paper. By allowing the enemy in, I never felt that I could effectively portray who Jesus is, in relation to the topic at hand.

A quote I happened to come across is what moved me out of the state of doubt I had been consumed by. ‘God doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies the called.’ After a time of reflecting and analyzing this quote, I realized; God never asked me to already be qualified because he qualifies me. Through him, I am qualified to share with you who He is. I am qualified through Christ Jesus. There were multiple instances where I felt doubt in myself and my capability of bringing a biblical standpoint to the death penalty. I allowed stress and anxiety to overwhelm me for a period of time. I allowed more room for anxiety and fear than I did for God, which caused me to fail at relaying what God was truly laying on my heart. Oftentimes, we feel this way when we feel something is too much, too overwhelming, or simply ‘impossible’. However, Luke 1:37 says, “For nothing will be impossible with God.”<sup>45</sup> Regardless of the fear and doubt each of us may experience under several circumstances, there is nothing that is impossible or that we are unqualified for, through God. This is if we place our faith, hope, and trust in him.

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<sup>44</sup> Keaton Browder, “Opinion: Christians and the Death Penalty,” Liberty Champion, March 1, 2021, <https://www.liberty.edu/champion/2021/03/opinion-christians-and-the-death-penalty/>

<sup>45</sup> Luke 1:37

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