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How Should I
Relate to Authority?

WHEN HAVE
YOU ACTED
UNKINDLY
TO SOMEONE
YOU
DISAGREED
WITH?

The
POINT ➤

Reflect Christ in how you interact
with all authorities.

➤ ROMANS 13:1-10

¹Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. ²So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. ⁴For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. ⁵Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. ⁶And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's

servants, continually attending to these tasks. ⁷Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.

⁸Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

In US elections, most voters go to an official polling place to cast their vote. However, astronauts aboard the International Space Station are allowed to send their ballots securely to Mission Control.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

God is Creator, and all creation is a result of His work and exists to glorify Him.

Politics can be a real minefield—especially for Christians. This reality became very clear when I was in middle school. During the year of a presidential election, our class held a mock election. In the days leading up to the vote, we had “friendly” debates. Except that, as middle schoolers, we hadn’t yet developed the maturity to speak to one another in a civil way. We ended up arguing with one another based on who we supported, and for those few days, lines were drawn dividing previously close friends.

On election day, as we dropped our ballots in the box and waited for the votes to be counted, we all knew very clearly that there were going to be winners and losers. We also knew there wasn’t a whole lot of grace to go around. Our teacher’s desire was for us to learn the details of the election process, and what we took away went far beyond the logistic details of our democratic process. We learned a lot about the ways people naturally relate to others when we’re divided about the things we value.

Sadly, people in real-life situations can also sometimes behave more like immature middle schoolers and this includes many Christians. However, God has called us to be kind even to those we disagree with. We’re to reflect Jesus in everything we do, even in politics.

ROMANS 13:1-4

1 What would it look like to obey Paul’s commands in these verses in today’s world?

2 When might disobeying authority be necessary for Christians?



Every interaction is made better when fueled by love, and no one has a greater obligation to love than the Christian. #BSFLHope



ROMANS 13:8-10

6 How can we keep political differences from being divisive?

ROMANS 13:5-7

3 What responsibilities do Christ-followers have in relation to our government?

4 What are the spiritual benefits of keeping civil laws?

5 Why is it important for us to respect and honor those in authority, even when we don't agree?

7 How does loving others disarm an argument?

8 What steps can you take to love even those whose politics you disagree with?



LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CREATION

God is Creator, and all creation is a result of His work and exists to glorify Him.

As a part of God's work of creation, He passed on to Adam (and all people) the responsibility to oversee the world and to rule in ways that reflect the character and goodness of God. Despite the fact that governmental systems are broken and individual rulers are often corrupt, God had nonetheless called us to submit to authority and work within governmental structures when possible in living for Christ. God is glorified when we live this way.

> CHRIST

The political issues we face today are not easy. But Scripture does speak to many topics that affect us in real ways.

9 What issues do you think are important in today's political world?

10 This week, look up some Scripture verses or ask a leader to help you identify verses that speak to these issues.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

Pray every day this week that God would allow you to understand His principles that address the issues you've identified.

> COMMUNITY

We certainly don't see eye to eye with all those in our schools or communities. It's also true that we don't always agree with those in our church.

11 How have disagreements with other believers hurt relationships within your church?



12 This week, take steps to make things right. What will you do to pursue reconciliation where there's conflict?

> CULTURE

When we see issues in our schools, communities, or nation which we believe are wrong or unhealthy, we're never to complain, but this doesn't mean we do nothing about the issues.

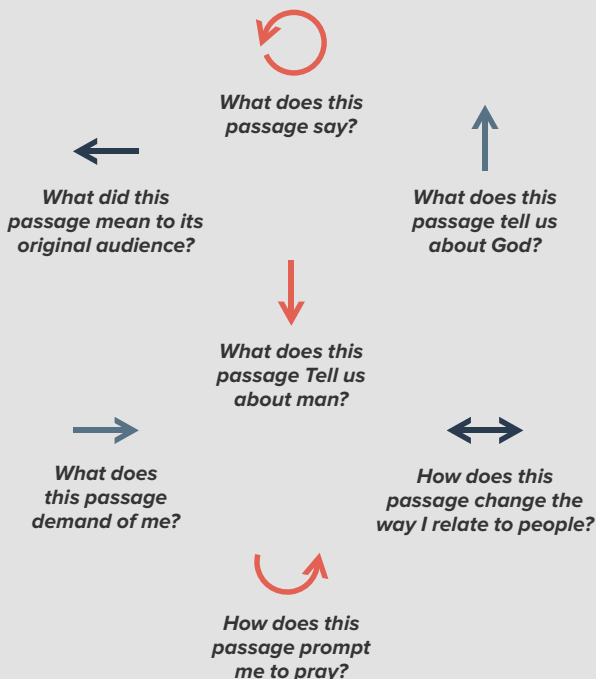
13 When have you been tempted to complain about the state of our country, about your school or community, or about politics?

14 Instead of grumbling about the things you don't appreciate, what will you do to help bring change?

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One **ROMANS 13:1**

There are times when we simply don't appreciate those things the authorities in our lives require of us. Mom may tell us to clean our rooms. A teacher may give a pop quiz. The 35 mph speed limit may seem unreasonably slow. Since sin's curse, people have been prideful, and submitting to others goes against our natural inclinations. After all, we want to do what we want. But God has called us to submit to the authorities He has established, and there is no authority on earth that exists apart from God's will. *Submit* speaks specifically to the way a soldier is to be obedient to the commands of his superior officer. This means no-questions-asked, absolute respect to all a commander orders. After all, lives are on the line. Our honoring God and the authorities He has placed in our lives is just as serious—our testimony has an impact on the lives of those God wants to save.

➤ **When have you struggled to submit to authority?**

➤ **Why is it so important that we live in submission to authority?**

Day Two

ROMANS 13:2



When Adam and Eve were in the garden, they enjoyed a relationship with God and were free to live as they pleased, but with one exception. They couldn't eat from one specific tree. But they refused to submit to God's rules, and they suffered judgment for their disobedience. When we disobey the authorities in our lives, we are essentially doing the same thing Adam and Eve did. And our disobedience has consequences. When we disobey teachers, our grades suffer. When we disobey parents, we're grounded. We should expect earthly consequences when we break earthly rules. Beyond this, we must know that disobeying earthly authorities is opposing God, as well, and there are also eternal consequences.

- **Why did Adam and Eve eat from the forbidden tree?**
- **Why does God see resisting earthly authority as resisting Him?**

Day Three

ROMANS 13:3

If you know the speed limit is 55 mph—if you don't drive, think about riding with your parents— but you're driving 65 mph, how are you going to respond when you pass a police officer? Most people will slam on the brakes and immediately a sense of paranoia sets in—*I hope he doesn't give me a ticket!* Speed limits are meant to keep people safe, and as long as we honor the rules, we have no reason to fear the authorities. It's only when we break the rules that we need to worry. This is the point Paul makes here. If we want to live free from fear and worry, honor the rules, do what's right, and submit to authority. They are God's way of helping people to live by healthy standards.

- **When have you felt fear because you broke a rule?**
- **How do rules and authorities help people live rightly?**

Day Four

ROMANS 13:4

Just as the authorities and their rules are meant to direct people toward doing the right thing, there is also the right to punish wrongdoing. For those who choose to break the rules, there are harsh consequences: for the speed-limit breakers, there are steep fines, and for the life-takers, their own freedoms are taken as they'll spend years behind bars. The law functions by rewarding those who follow the rules and punishing those who refuse to submit. This is a tension all people experience from our earliest days. We've all tried to get away with certain things, and we've all been caught and felt the pain of the consequences. The Christian life requires that we learn to submit to authority—particularly to God—not only because we want to avoid the consequences of wrong behavior, but because we want to demonstrate humility and honor toward God.

➤ **When have you tried to get away with something, but got caught?**

➤ **Why isn't it enough to obey only in order to avoid consequences?**

Day Five

ROMANS 13:5



Consequences for our actions should be a legitimate motivator for right living. However, this isn't the highest reason to avoid sin and wrongdoing. Scripture teaches that all people have a conscience, which refers to an internal moral awareness that holds us to our own personal standards of right and wrong. Sin has a way of eroding our conscience, and if we continually sin, we'll lose sight of what's truly right and wrong. This is pretty terrifying—those with a hardened conscience can live in sin without even knowing they're walking away from God. This is just one reason it's so important to do right. We want our conscience to remain sensitive, so when we even begin to do wrong, we're convicted, turn around, and choose to remain close to God.

➤ **When has your conscience convicted you, even when you did wrong in secret and there would have been no other consequences?**

➤ **Why is it important to live by conscience?**