

Honor  
Honoring Our Government  
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TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

**Romans 13:1–7 (NLT)**

*Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. 2 So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. 3 For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. 4 The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. 5 So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience. 6 Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are serving God in what they do. 7 Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.*

**Ecclesiastes 8:11 (NLT)**

*11 When a crime is not punished quickly, people feel it is safe to do wrong.*

**Acts 4:18-20 (NLT)**

*18 So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? 20 We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard."*

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- If you could change one thing about our federal, state, or local government, what would it be?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- Have you ever traveled to a 3rd world country? How did it change your perspective about this country? What are you most thankful for as an American citizen?
- **Read Romans 13:1-7**. What's the purpose of government? Is our government fulfilling that purpose?
- **Read Ecclesiastes 8:11**. What happens when crime is not punished?
- Have you ever thought about police officers, teachers, IRS agents as "God's servants, sent for your good?" How would that change your attitude toward them?
- Do you think you could serve as a police officer or a soldier even if it meant you would have to use deadly force against an evildoer who was endangering others? Why or why not?
- If you were living in the American colonies during 1776, would you have supported the American War of Independence or would you have remained loyal to the British government?
- **Read Acts 4:18-20**. When is it right to disobey the governing authorities?
- What can we do as individual citizens to make our government better?
- What can the Gospel of Jesus Christ do that no government can? Where do you place your ultimate hope?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Try the three action steps Troy mentioned regarding honoring our government: pray, vote, and get involved. Consider researching relevant issues in lieu of voting.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Heavenly Father, guide our hearts to obey our leaders and government, as You have commanded. Grant wisdom to those in authority at all levels, that they may lead with integrity and justice. May our actions reflect Your love and contribute to peace and order in our community. Amen.

**Question: "How should a Christian view politics?"**

**Answer:** If there is anything that will spark a spontaneous debate, if not an outright argument, it is a discussion involving politics—even among believers. As followers of Christ, what should be our attitude and our involvement with politics? It has been said that “religion and politics don’t mix.” But is that really true? Can we have political views outside the considerations of our Christian faith? The answer is no, we cannot. The Bible gives us two truths regarding our stance towards politics and government.

The first truth is that the will of God permeates and supersedes every aspect of life. It is God’s will that takes precedence over everything and everyone (Matthew 6:33). God’s plans and purposes are fixed, and His will is inviolable. What He has purposed, He will bring to pass, and no government can thwart His will (Daniel 4:34-35). In fact, it is God who “sets up kings and deposes them” (Daniel 2:21) because “the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (Daniel 4:17). A clear understanding of this truth will help us to see that politics is merely a method God uses to accomplish His will. Even though evil men abuse their political power, meaning it for evil, God means it for good, working “all things together for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Second, we must grasp the fact that our government cannot save us! Only God can. We never read in the New Testament of Jesus or any of the apostles expending any time or energy schooling believers on how to reform the pagan world of its idolatrous, immoral, and corrupt practices via the government. The apostles never called for believers to demonstrate civil disobedience to protest the Roman Empire's unjust laws or brutal schemes. Instead, the apostles commanded the first-century Christians, as well as us today, to proclaim the gospel and live lives that give clear evidence to the gospel’s transforming power.

There is no doubt that our responsibility to government is to obey the laws and be good citizens (Romans 13:1–2). God has established all authority, and He does so for our benefit, “to commend those who do right” (1 Peter 2:13–15). Paul tells us in Romans 13:1–8 that it is the government’s responsibility to rule in authority over us—hopefully for our good—to collect taxes, and to keep the peace. Where we have a voice and can elect our leaders, we should exercise that right by voting for those who best demonstrate Christian principles.

One of Satan’s grandest deceptions is that we can rest our hope for cultural morality and godly living in politicians and governmental officials. A nation’s hope for change is not to be found in any country’s ruling class. The church has made a mistake if it thinks that it is the job of politicians to defend, to advance, and to guard biblical truths and Christian values.

The church’s unique, God-given purpose does not lie in political activism. Nowhere in Scripture do we have the directive to spend our energy, our time, or our money in governmental affairs. Our mission lies not in changing the nation through political reform, but in changing hearts through the Word of God. When believers think the growth and influence of Christ can somehow be allied with government policy, they corrupt the mission of the church. Our Christian mandate is to spread the gospel of Christ and to preach against the sins of our time. Only as the hearts of individuals in a culture are changed by Christ will the culture begin to reflect that change.

Believers throughout the ages have lived, and even flourished, under antagonistic, repressive, pagan governments. This was especially true of the first-century believers who, under merciless political regimes, sustained their faith under immense cultural stress. They understood that it was they, not their governments, who were the light of the world and the salt of the earth. They adhered to Paul’s teaching to obey their governing authorities, even to honor, respect, and pray for them (Romans 13:1-8). More importantly, they understood that, as believers, their hope resided in the protection that only God supplies. The same holds true for us today. When we follow the teachings of the Scriptures, we become the light of the world as God has intended for us to be (Matthew 5:16).

Political entities are not the savior of the world. The salvation for all mankind has been manifested in Jesus Christ. God knew that our world needed saving long before any national government was ever founded. He demonstrated to the world that redemption could not be accomplished through the power of man, economic strength, military might, or politics. Peace of mind, contentment, hope, and joy—and the salvation of mankind—are provided only through Jesus’ death and resurrection.