

Respectful Citizens

FCC Life Group Discussion Notes

Based on the "Who God Wants Us To Be" Series of Matthew Rogers

08-24-2025

Summary of the Sermon

The sermon, based on Romans 13:1-7, addresses the Christian's relationship with governing authorities in a time of societal division and mistrust. Written by Paul in AD 57 during the early reign of Emperor Nero, the text urges believers to submit to and respect governing authorities, recognizing them as instituted by God to maintain order and serve as His "deacons" and "ministers." Despite the imperfections of human leaders, Christians are called to obey laws unless they directly contradict God's commands, pay taxes, and show respect and honor to authorities. This submission reflects a transformed mind, aligning with God's divine order, and prepares believers to live as respectful citizens in a fallen world.

Ice Breaker for Discussion

Question: If you could create one law to make the world a better place, what would it be and why? (Encourage fun and thoughtful responses to get everyone engaged.)

Point 1: Submit to Governing Authorities

Scripture Reading: (Direct someone, e.g., John) to read Romans 13:1-2 aloud:

"Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves."

Summary:

Paul teaches that all authority is ultimately from God, and governing authorities are instituted by Him to maintain order in society. Resisting these authorities is akin to opposing God's command. Even when laws seem trivial or inconvenient (e.g., speed limits or fireworks regulations), Christians are called to submit, recognizing that God's ordained authority prevents chaos. The only exceptions are when authorities command something God forbids or forbid something God commands.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think God places such emphasis on submitting to governing authorities, even when we disagree with certain laws?
2. Can you share a personal experience where submitting to a rule or law was challenging? How did you handle it, and what did you learn?

Point 2: Government as God's Servant

Scripture Reading: (Direct someone, e.g., Sarah) to read Romans 13:3-4 aloud:

"For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. For 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."

Summary:

The government is described as God's "deacon" (diakonos), tasked with serving society by rewarding good behavior and punishing wrongdoing. This role reflects God's desire to maintain order until Christ's return. Christians are to submit not just out of fear of punishment but because their renewed conscience, guided by the Holy Spirit, recognizes the government's divine purpose.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does viewing the government as God's servant change your perspective on its role in society?
2. What are some ways we can support the government in fulfilling its role as a "deacon" for good in our community?

Point 3: Respect and Honor Authorities

Scripture Reading: (Direct someone, e.g., Michael) to read Romans 13:7 aloud:

"Pay 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."

Summary:

Beyond submission, Christians are called to respect and honor governing authorities, recognizing them as God's "ministers" (leitourgos). This respect extends to paying taxes and refraining from demeaning or dehumanizing leaders, even those with flawed character, like Nero or Caligula. Respecting authorities does not mean endorsing their actions but acknowledging their God-given role. The sermon encourages praying for leaders, as urged in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, to seek wisdom for their roles.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it challenging to show respect to government officials we disagree with, and how can we overcome this?
2. How can praying for our leaders, as suggested in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, shape our attitude toward them and our community?

Recap of the Lesson

The sermon emphasizes that Christians, as transformed followers of Jesus, are called to submit to and respect governing authorities, recognizing them as God's servants for maintaining order. This involves obeying laws, paying taxes, and honoring leaders, even in challenging times, unless their commands directly oppose God's will. By living as respectful citizens, we reflect our trust in God's sovereignty and contribute to a peaceful, godly society.

Challenge

This week, take time to pray for a specific government official (local, state, or national) by name, asking God to grant them wisdom and guidance in their role. Additionally, reflect on one area in your life where you might be tempted to act "above the law" (e.g., speeding, ignoring minor regulations) and commit to submitting to that law as an act of obedience to God.