

# **The Believer's Responsibility in relation to Civil Government**

## **Compiled by Bill Scheidler**

### **Key Verses (NKJV unless noted)**

**Mark 12:17** (See also: Mt. 22:15-22; Lk. 20:20-26)

*And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

### **Romans 13:1-7**

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*

### **I Timothy 2:1-7**

*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, 7 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

### **Titus 3:1-7**

*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

### **I Peter 2:13-17**

*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers*

*and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

## **I. The Christian has an obligation to the state as a good citizen.**

This obligation is based on the common benefits that we all receive from the state. As good citizens, Christians are instructed by God...

A. To give the state what they ask for. In a democratic society this includes:

1. Registering for and voting in all elections.
2. Participating in the political process.
3. Becoming informed on the issues.
4. Expressing ones opinion to elected officials and in the public forum.
5. Running for office as so directed.
6. Assisting good candidates to get elected with our time and resources.

B. To submit to the authority of the state.

1. This means cooperating with civil laws and codes.
2. This has a limitation insofar as the state does not ask the believer to violate the clear teachings of the Word of God (Acts 5:29).

C. To pay taxes to the state.

D. To show respect to those who are in office.

## **II. The Christian has a ministry and moral obligation to the state as a follower of God.**

A. To submit to God-ordained powers.

B. To pray for all who are in authority.

C. To promote righteousness (Pro. 14:34; Is. 1:17).

D. To foster quietness, peace and the things that support civil order.

E. To be prepared to give godly testimony to the state (Mk. 13:9).

F. To assist righteous candidates in getting elected with our time and resources (Pro. 14:34).

## **III. Activated Christians have the power to make things better.**

A. By keeping the doors open for evangelism and missionary activity.

B. By thwarting the anti-Christ agenda in society and the nations.

C. By promoting a wholesome environment for the raising of godly families.

D. By being faithful stewards of all that God has placed in our hands.

E. By creating an atmosphere where it is easy for leaders to do right and difficult for them to do wrong.

**IV. The Christian trusts that God is in charge and can do what he/she cannot do (Job 33:15-17).**

A. Job 33:14-17, NLT

*For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. 15 He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. 16 He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. 17 He makes them turn from doing wrong; He keeps them from pride.*

B. Psalm 22:27-28, NIV

*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.*

C. Proverbs 21:1 (See also: Pro. 8:15-16)

*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.*

D. Daniel 2:20-21 (See also: Dan. 4:17, 32)

*Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding."*

**Notable Quotes:**

"All that is necessary for the forces of evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing." --Unknown

"It is evident that our nations is on a slippery slope of moral and spiritual decline. Most Christians are probably deeply concerned about the deterioration. They should be. On the other hand, too many of those who grieve over this state of affairs are doing nothing to change it. They thus become part of the problem." -- Richard Cizik

"Being salt and light in this age means contending responsibly for godly standards wherever they are under assault. There is no escaping the mixture of religion and politics, because nearly every law is the result of somebody's judgment about what is good and what is bad." -- Tom Minnery

"Unlike the Roman Empire in the first century, our country is a participatory republic. We have the *obligation* to make our voices heard and to get involved in dialogue. Our government asks us, as citizens, to participate, not merely to shut up and obey. In the United States, 'We, the people'

means Christians as well as non-Christians. Submission in our political system includes being willing to contribute to the political process, not withdraw from it.” -- Tom Minnery

“Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote that he is not making a present or a compliment to please an individual - or at least that he ought not so to do; but that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country.” –Samuel Adams

## **A Secret Weapon—Responsible Letter Writing**

One way to have a strong voice that is much more powerful than the ballot box is through responsible letter writing. Writing letters is a valuable and effective tool for influencing our society in many different realms. Most elected officials have one thing in common—they want to be re-elected. Therefore they tend to take written correspondence very seriously.

One well written letter can have a powerful effect on the thinking and voting habits of elected officials on both the local and national level. However, there are some secrets to a well-written letter.

1. Write legibly in your own words. Form letters have little impact. Handwritten letter often get special attention.
2. Confine the letter to one specific issue. If you have other concerns, write another letter. A one issue letter will often be channeled to the specific department involved.
3. Be brief and to the point. Letter that are more than one page are put aside and perhaps never even read. Most officials are very busy and like to get their information easily and quickly.
4. Give reasons for your position avoiding emotional argument and threats of any kind. Cite as many specifics as possible from news articles, experts' quotations, etc. Do not assume that they are totally informed on all of the specifics pertaining to your issue.
5. Keep a positive tone in your letter. Do not berate the official but encourage him or her with constructive comments. Say, "Well done!" where deserved.
6. Ask for a response to your specific questions and ask for his or her position on the matter. Try to ask your questions in such a way that it will be difficult to answer by computer generated response.
7. Be accurate and courteous. Make sure of your facts including the proper spelling of names and the accurate use of titles.
8. Encourage others to write on a similar vein. When an official receives many letters of this nature it can have a powerful effect on their voting.

### **Who to Write**

Almost any public official can be a legitimate target for your well-written correspondence.

The President (Envelop Address: The President; Greeting: Dear Mr. President)

The Vice President (Envelop Address: The Vice President; Greeting: Dear Mr. Vice President)

Cabinet Members (Envelop Address: The Honorable \_\_\_\_; Greeting: Dear Secretary \_\_\_\_)

Supreme Court Justices (Envelop Address: The Honorable \_\_\_\_; Greeting: Dear Justice \_\_\_\_)

Senator (Envelop Address: The Honorable \_\_\_\_; Greeting: Dear Senator \_\_\_\_)

Representative (Envelop Address: The Honorable \_\_\_\_; Greeting: Dear Justice \_\_\_\_)

Others: Local Justices, County Officials, City Officials, Local Agencies, School Boards; Commissioners, Whoever is in a place of making decisions that affect society in any way!