

Should We Treat Others Based On How They Treat Us?

Romans 13

Have you heard the following...

If you respect me, I'll respect you.

If you are nice to me, I'll be nice to you.

Not everyone gets the same version of me. To some, I am friendly; to others, I am mean. I act accordingly.

These are cute sayings; however, they are not Christian sayings and have no place in Christian's minds.

How should we treat others?

What Does The Bible Say?

Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. (Romans 13:1 NLT)

Respect the Government.

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.” (Acts 4:18–20 NLT)

We are to obey the laws of our country unless they go against God’s laws.

9 For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law. (Romans 13:9–10 NLT)

Love all people, and that means regardless of how they treat you.

Why are we to respect our government and love other people?

11 This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. (Romans 13:11–12 NLT)

So wake up; each day, we are closer to when the Lord comes back again.

How Can You Obey?

So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. ¹³ Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. (Romans 13:12–13 NLT)

Clean up because people must see that we live differently.

14 Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires. (Romans 13:14 NLT)

Grow up, and live in the presence of Christ each day.

We respect those who have authority over us and love everyone as we love ourselves because we do not know how much time we have left to witness for Christ.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

This week's Insights to The Biblical World is from Michael S. Heiser, *Brief Insights on Mastering the Bible: 80 Expert Insights on the Bible, Explained in a Single Minute*, The 60 Second Scholar (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 59–60.

Verses used in Bible & Science:

4 He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is! (Deuteronomy 32:4 NLT)

14 Then the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. (Genesis 3:14 NLT)

16 Then he said to the woman, “I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16 NLT)

17 And to the man he said, “Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. 18 It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. (Genesis 3:17-18 NLT)

29 Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.

30 And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened. (Genesis 1:29-30 NLT)

2 All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. 3 I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. (Genesis 9:2-3 NLT)

25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust. In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!” (Isaiah 65:25 NLT)

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” (Revelation 21:4 NLT)

Explore:

Believers Submit to Those in Authority Unless It Means Disobeying God (Romans 13:1-7)

Paul first reminded his readers that having a heavenly citizenship did not free them from earthly obligations and authority. He began by expressing that all people are to submit to the governing authorities. This responsibility is for non-Christian and Christian alike. At its root, the term submit or be subject to was a military term speaking of soldiers arranged in order under a superior.

Paul also affirmed in verse 1 that God is the source of all authority. He instituted civil authority and He places governing leaders in their positions, a truth established in passages such as Daniel 4:17, 25 and John 19:11. It is important to note, however, that God's establishment of government does not mean that He approves of evil and corrupt regimes.

Believers are to submit to these authorities, recognizing the authority they have over the citizenry. The only exception would be directives that would cause us to disobey God. The logical conclusion to such teaching is that those who oppose authorities are opposing God and placing themselves under judgment (verse 2). The judgment spoken of here likely referred to a judicial sentence from a magistrate or punishment from other governing authorities. Some commentators, however, take this admonition to refer to a divine judgment from God.

Paul also challenged his readers to submit to authority in order to be free from danger and punishment. He affirmed that authorities have been given the responsibility to enforce the law and exact punishment on crime and criminals. They keep order (verses 3-4). And no matter how bad the government may be, as a general rule, they oppose lawlessness. For instance, killing, stealing, and abuse are viewed as wrong in nearly every administration. Believers submit to the authority of the

government not only to receive the “approval” of the government, but more importantly because it is God’s servant for good. The “sword” of verse 4 refers to the government’s authority to punish, even if by death. Those who are doing what is good and right generally have no cause for worry. On the other hand, those who do wrong should be afraid of the authorities and the judgment they can bring.

Another reason for submitting to authorities is to keep from violating one’s conscience (verse 5). We are to pay taxes and give respect and honor to those in authority because God appointed them. By doing so we keep a clear conscience before God and men. The challenge arises when the government conflicts with one’s conscience. How then should one respond? When this happened in the early church, Peter and John asserted that their obedience was first and foremost to God, and not to man (Acts 5:29). When the authorities do not directly violate God’s Word, however, one should obey their directives and thus

keep a clear conscience. In verse 6, the apostle viewed public officials (government) as God's servants because their authority comes from Him.

Having established the necessity and validity of the government, Paul gave a series of commands in verse 7 which illustrate practical response to the government. This response is portrayed in four specific things a believer should "pay": taxes, revenue, respect, and honor. Especially noteworthy was the apostle's mention of taxes considering the fact that taxes helped fund Roman armies that did evil while also maintaining order.

Regardless, Paul saw the government as an agency that could be used by God and should be recognized as such. Thus, every government official is also "owed" honor and respect, even if only for the position in which they serve.

Explore:

Under what circumstances should a believer choose not to obey human authority? This is a frequently discussed topic, especially in a day in which there is such disdain for the government and for politicians in general. This would have been a popular question during Paul's day under the rule of Nero, one of the world's most vile and anti-Christian leaders ever. While many of the readers may have expected Paul to encourage resistance to the government, he actually did the opposite and provided a framework for living in a hostile environment. This started with the believer submitting to the authorities. How then does this compare to Acts 4:19 and 5:29? These perceived "opposing passages" provide a framework in which believers can answer this question.

- Christians can and should resist a government that compels or commands evil. (Note: this is different from a government that supports or encourages evil.) When this happens, however, Christians should pray and work in a nonviolent fashion to

change such a government. Sometimes this requires God-fearing people to be voted into office.

- Disobedience to the laws of the land is permitted only when the laws or commands are in direct violation of the law of God, as given in Scripture. This does not include preferences (as good as they may be) or mere opposition to a particular political party.
- If and when the time comes for a believer to disobey or stand against government orders, he or she must accept that government's punishment for his or her actions. In other words, one must be willing to pay the price just as Paul, Peter, John, Stephen, and many others were willing to do for the sake of the gospel.
- Believers are permitted and encouraged to work to elect and install new government leaders within the laws that have

already been established, with the intent of “rescuing” the government from itself.

- Believers, regardless of party affiliation or personal preference, are commanded to pray for those in authority. After all, it is God who can intervene and change any ungodly path that is being pursued or use “bad” leaders to accomplish His purpose.

Explore:

This passage outlines the righteous justification of law enforcement and military for carrying out their lawful duties. As agents of the God-ordained government, even when taking a

life, they are operating under the authority of God to punish evildoers.

Explore:

Because God is the Sovereign Lord of all, we are to submit to His authority in all things. Submitting to earthly authority illustrates this truth.

Explore:

**Believers Fulfill God's Law by Showing Love to Others
(Romans 13:8-10)**

Here, Paul moved from the impersonal concept of government agencies and authority to a more personal motivation—love for people. Paul reminded his readers that the law of love is the primary law for the believer to submit to. We are called to love

all people, especially other believers (verse 8). This is the basic principle of the Christian life and was the new commandment given by Jesus to His disciples (John 13:34).

The principle of verse 8 is quite simple: if people simply loved others as they should, there would be no need for any other laws. The fulfillment of this single law would not only guide and govern one's attitudes and actions toward government officials, but also toward all people. Truly loving others would cause us to keep all of God's commands regarding our relations with other people (verses 9-10). Paul had encouraged his readers to pay what was due in relation to money, taxes, and honor. Now he extended that obligation to love.

In support of this principle, he listed several of the Ten Commandments that deal with interpersonal relationships in an attempt to encourage love for one another. You shall not:

- Commit adultery—any sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage. No other sin practiced widely is as devastating as sexual sin. Love causes one to have more respect for others than to sin against them in this way.

- Kill or murder—It goes without saying that our love for others will cause us to have the highest regard for their safety and well-being. Note: Jesus taught a connection between hatred and murder in Matthew 5:21-22.

- Steal—the unlawful taking of others’ personal property. At its core, this command demands respect for the property or possessions of others.

- Covet—speaks to an obsession or strong desire that would compel an individual to violate another person’s property. This is not a blanket condemnation of a desire to possess or collect things.

The implication of these verses is clear. Who would dare steal from someone they truly love? Who would injure a person they truly love? In summary, Paul said love does no harm to a neighbor because one is too busy seeking his neighbor's good (verse 10).

Explore:

Believers Display the Character and Lifestyle of Christ

(Romans 13:11-14)

The love presented in the previous verses is always good and expected from those who follow Christ. It is especially important, however, when considering the times in which we live (verse 11). This was a reference to the last days and the second coming of Christ. "Salvation" speaks of ultimate or final salvation that is realized in eternity. Being aware of these factors,

believers are to “wake up” from their slumber or their lethargic, lazy Christianity.

Understanding that we are living in the “last days” calls the believer to some specific actions (verses 12- 14). The night of verse 12 characterized the age in which we now live while the day referred to the time of the return of Christ. Although believers currently live in the night, they are to cast off the works of darkness. Examples of these sinful deeds are given in verse 13 and in passages such as Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Peter 4:3.

Having removed the works of darkness, the believer is then to equip him or herself with the armor of light. Because Christians are engaged in a daily spiritual warfare, they must be equipped and ready for battle. This equipping is spelled out in detail in passages such as Ephesians 6:10-17. The armor of light is a unique expression, however. Because well-meaning and well-defined Christian behavior is often equated as being in the light,

it appears Paul is encouraging a shedding of evil deeds and replacing them with Christ-honoring works that will invade the darkness. For other examples of the Christian life as synonymous with light, see Ephesians 5:8, Colossians 1:12, and 1 John 1:7.

In summary, Christ-followers are to live honestly and properly, or in a becoming way (verse 13). Again, Paul admonished believers to rid themselves of the deeds of darkness and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The implication is that the attitudes of rebellion and disobedience have their origin in the works of darkness. Rather we are to live in the example and spirit of Christ who not only was light, but also yielded His life to the authorities of His day. In living this way, believers are to give no thought to how to gratify or fulfill the evil desires of the sinful nature.

Question 1 of 5

What is typology in the Bible? Explain how the Passover lamb is a type representing Christ.

Question 2 of 5

What does it mean to submit to those in positions of authority?

Question 3 of 5

When should a believer choose not to obey human authority?

Question 4 of 5

In what practical ways can we demonstrate Christ's love to others this week?

Question 5 of 5

How would Christ conduct Himself in our culture? What would it look like?

