

If you have limited time to prepare, this 3-step outline is a helpful tool for leading a small group discussion:

1. Read the text from Sunday's message.
2. What did you find most helpful/confusing/new/ that you did not understand from the message?
3. What were your big takeaways? How will you put these into practice in your life?

Getting Started

- What was the attitude toward government in your home when you were growing up?
- Discuss how Romans 13:1-7 is related to the preceding paragraph (12:17-21).

Discussion

What is the overall intention of this passage? Clearly it does not intend to encourage disobedience to the government or even to lay the theological basis for such disobedience. It warns us against the danger of ignoring the rightful place government has in God's ordering of the world according to his purposes. Government, and each individual state and ruler, is appointed by God. Christians seeking to do God's will, therefore, recognize the right of the governing authorities to command them to do things, they should, as much as possible, do what the government says. But implicit always in the idea of submission is the need to recognize that God is at the pinnacle of any hierarchy. While not always explicit, Paul assumes that one's ultimate submission must be to God and no human being or institution can ever stand as the ultimate authority for a believer. (Douglas Moo, The NIV Application Commentary)

- Read Romans 13:1-7. Verse 1 says that we are to submit to governing authorities. Why? (Find all the reasons you can in verses 1-7.)
- How do the authorities in our country and locality do us good (Romans 13:4)?
- Read Acts 4:1-31 and 5:17-42. How did the apostles show submission to the authorities in these passages?
 - The apostles disobeyed the clear command of the authorities. Why was this disobedience not a rebellion against the authority God established?
 - What lessons can we draw for our own submission and obedience?

Since it is taught so consistently in Scripture, we do not have too much difficulty coming to grips with the idea that God has ordained all governing authorities and that we must recognize that we stand under them. But we do have difficulty with the apparent demand of Romans 13 that we always do whatever any governmental authority tells us to do. On what basis do we allow exceptions without doing violence to these verses? (Douglas Moo)

Consider the following ...

- Hitler's Germany
 - Pre-civil War United States (1800s)
 - Islamic Fundamentalist regime
 - Oppressive Communist regimes in Russia, China or North Korea
- Discuss some specific ways in which you can apply Romans 13:1-7 to your own dealings with authorities.
 - No government is perfect, and some are cruel and corrupt. If you were under a cruel and corrupt government, how could you follow the underlying principles of Romans 13 and still do what is right?

Prayer

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. ⁷ And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles. (1 Timothy 2:1-7)

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.’ ²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:23-30)