

TEXT Daniel 6:1-5; Romans 13:1-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Matthew 22:21; 1 Timothy 2:1,2; Titus 3:1

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that those in authority have received their position through divine allowance; and as such are to be accorded obedience and respect.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. — Romans 13:1

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter. — Ecclesiastes 10:20

ANSWER TITLE: **We Find No Fault**

SEARCH TITLE: **Respect for Governmental Authority**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

God is the supreme Governor of the universe. He revealed to us that He loved order and regularity when He placed the sun, moon, and stars in their orbits and keeps them revolving in their circuits year after year. Paul notes that “the powers that be are ordained of God” and we are instructed to be obedient unto them. In our lesson we find an example of a man who rightly disobeyed the command of a king. Daniel was aware “that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Daniel 4:17), but he also knew that we have to obey God rather than man. He knew that his three friends were thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused a king’s order to bow to an idol. When he knew that

a law had been signed which stated that for thirty days no one could petition any God or man except the king, Daniel ignored the order and prayed as he had previously. He was thrown into the lions’ den because of his disobedience, but an angel shut the mouths of the lions and Daniel was unharmed.

Down through the centuries millions have sealed their testimony with their blood because they took an uncompromising stand for the Lord. We can be very thankful if we live in a land whose constitution is based on the Word of God and have complete freedom to worship God as we please.

YOUR OPENER

Respect for Governmental Authority

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KEY VERSE: Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

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RESPONSES

1. Soon after arriving in Babylon, Daniel appealed to the superintendent of the students at the king's school to allow the Hebrews to eat vegetables and drink water instead of eating the king's meat and drinking his wine, which had, no doubt, been offered to idols. Daniel could not conscientiously cooperate with the king's mandate. Yet his spirit of cooperation toward the king's objective cemented the affection and trust of the superintendent, and with God's help, the problem was solved. The key was Daniel's attitude toward God, his respect for his superintendent, and the absence of rebellion toward his circumstances of captivity.

2. Involve the students in a discussion of Romans 13:1-3 and 1 Peter 2:13-17, bringing out that governmental authority is ordained by God. Paul's comment in verse 3, "for rulers are not a terror to good works," indicates that he is speaking of laws which are not opposed to God's laws. Thus, Christians need have no fear regarding obedience to them. This study presents an opportunity to point out how privileged are those who live in a free country and have laws based on Christian principles.

One of the most beautiful examples of proper conduct toward governmental authority in all the Bible is given to us in the life of Daniel. Here was a Hebrew lad, perhaps of princely descent, who found himself forcibly torn away from his people and homeland, and placed in a heathen court in the city of Babylon. Being a captive (essentially a slave), it would have been easy for him to hate his captors and feel resentment and rebellion. Instead, even after much testing and many years of service, the record shows that Daniel was so cooperative in this foreign environment that the people could find no fault with him until they wrote a law which required him to choose between God and King Darius. He not only obeyed the civil law of the Babylonians, Medes, and Persians where it did not conflict with God's Law; but, because of his trust in God and God-given wisdom, he actually rose to a position where, as the man-in-charge next to the ruling monarch, he administered that law.

1. In what way did the young exile, Daniel (Daniel 1:1-16), show us how to blend the spirit of cooperation and obedience to authority, with the power of appeal to that authority?

2. Why do you think Paul and Peter, through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, instructed followers of the Lord to obey governmental authority?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

3. List two laws with which you are acquainted, and the benefits of obeying these laws.

4. According to Romans 13:5, what are two motivating factors for keeping the law?

5. Clip from a current newspaper or magazine an article showing how a “minor” infraction of the law led to a major problem. Take the article and be ready to discuss it in class.

6. What should the Christian’s attitude be toward existing tax laws?

7. Suppose, for a moment, that you live in a totalitarian state where you are forbidden to openly declare Christ or gather with other Christians to worship God. What would you seek to do about the situation, and why?

3. Your students’ answers should generate appreciation for law and order. Laws do have restrictive qualities, but they can result in long-term benefits to ourselves and society.

4. Your students will bring out that fear of wrath (or punishment), and desire to have a clear conscience are two motivating factors. Ask your students to discuss what the results of violation of the law might be. They should conclude that trouble and punishment will come, if not immediately, then eventually and surely (Numbers 32:23; Romans 13:2,4). An example, such as Achan at Jericho (Joshua 7), could be used to clinch this point.

5. Allow time to share the clippings your students have brought. These should illustrate the need to be conscientious in what might seem less important areas of the law.

6. The same as toward any other laws—we should observe them honestly and carefully. As your students discuss this, they will recognize the services provided for us through payment of taxes. See Romans 13:6,7. Use 1 Peter 2:13,14 to point out that we are commanded in God’s Word to obey the ordinances or laws, and we cannot bring honor to the Lord by disregarding any of them.

7. Allow time for discussion of possible courses of action such as worshiping in secret, or moving to another locale. Your students should be impressed with the fact that when man’s laws are in conflict with Christian principles, God’s commands stand above man’s. See Acts 5:29. Ask your students for Biblical examples of some who were forced to take this position; for instance, Moses’ parents, the three Hebrew children, or Daniel himself as his story progresses.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What is a law? What is authority?

If you were in authority, how would you want to be treated?

Give your response to the question asked at the end of our ANSWER story, and support it.

Do you have to respect your teachers? Why?

If you did not keep all the laws of the land would this affect your testimony?

Why do we have laws?

Name ten of God's Laws (Exodus 20). How are these Laws and man's laws alike?

As a younger man, Daniel had been taken captive and was now living in a foreign country. Should he have to obey the laws of that country? If so, why?

Why do you believe Daniel was chosen as one of three presidents in the land? What makes you think he did a good job?

How important is it that even very young children be taught to obey? How might this affect the way they behave in school and, later in life, in the community and on the job?

THINGS TO DO

Have your students write what they think life would be like if there were no laws or means of authority to enforce them.

Bring a Driver's Manual to class. Discuss how thoroughly young people study this booklet—trying to learn the laws regarding operation of a motor vehicle. Bring out that we should study God's laws just as diligently. If we fail to observe the laws in the Driver's Manual, we may endanger our physical lives. If we disobey God's laws we will endanger our spiritual lives.

Open your class by showing a symbol of authority: a police badge, a gavel, a policeman's hat, etc. Discuss what feelings this symbol arouses in your students. God's Word says to obey them that have the rule over you. Why? Because it keeps you from trouble. Who has the

rule over you? God, parents, ministers, police, school officials. Because these people were given this authority through God's divine allowance, they should be respected. Let's obey God's Word!

Bring an umbrella to class. Open it and ask what it is used for. Your students will respond that it protects a person from rain or sun. Will it do any good if the person steps out from under its protection? The laws of our land and the authority figures who implement and enforce them are like the umbrella. They are provided for our protection. If we choose to break the law or make our own rules, we are eliminating the protection offered, just like when a person steps out from under the umbrella.

Show pictures of several of our public officials and servants: president, mayor, fireman, policeman, etc. Let the children name the things that these people do for us. The children should know these people deserve our respect and obedience.

Answers for ANSWER

