

# Submission



## Ice-Breaker

1. Who holds the record in your group for the most traffic tickets?
2. Who is your favorite President?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 for totally obedient and 10 for totally rebellious), how much of a rebel were you as a teenager?



## Scripture Passage

Romans 13:1-7

**13** Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.<sup>2</sup>Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.<sup>3</sup>For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.<sup>4</sup>For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.<sup>5</sup>Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

<sup>6</sup>This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing.<sup>7</sup> Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.



## Bible Study

1. How comfortable are you discussing politics and religion? How do you feel about the mixing of the two?
2. How do you feel about the taxes withheld from your paycheck?
3. Why does Paul say we should submit to governing authorities? What's the difference between submitting to authorities and unconditionally obeying them?
4. In what ways is the government to be "God's servant"?
5. Which area is most tempting for you to hedge on: Job responsibilities? Respecting employers? Income tax regulations? Respecting politicians? Honoring parents? Honoring church leaders? Other?
6. Who are the authorities in your life? How well have you related to them? How could you do better?
7. How was your walk with the Lord this past week? Did you feel more submitted or rebellious in that relationship?

**CASE STUDY:** The school board has ruled that no religious organizations can hold meetings on school property. At the same time the board approved the distribution of contraceptives without

parental consent. What's your response?

## Reference Notes

**13:1-7** Paul's concern is how Christians relate to those outside the church. The general principles in 12:17-21 (e.g., don't resort to violence to "get even") are now given specific focus in this discussion of the relationship of Christians to civil authorities. Historical conditions must be remembered, lest one understands this text to teach more than it does. In Paul's day, Rome was clearly a restraining force against chaos. Furthermore, it was crucial that Christians be seen as good citizens and not be expelled from Rome, as had the Jews because of a riot some years earlier (probably occasioned by Christ being preached in the synagogue). Note, too, that Paul does not deal with the question of how Christians relate to a government gone sour, just as in Romans he doesn't tell Christians how to relate to an apostate church. Nor does he give any guidance as to how Christians should involve themselves in a participatory democracy. This was a specific word to particular Christians in a given era. Care must be taken in making modern applications, especially since in the book of Revelation Rome clearly appears to be pictured as having fallen under the control of evil, and Christians must then relate to it quite differently.

**13:1 *Everyone*.** That is, every Christian in Rome; no one is exempt. **submit.** The word is sometimes mistranslated "obey" (there are three Greek words for obedience). Submission must be understood in light of Romans 12:10 (honoring others above oneself) and Philippians 2:3-4 (counting others as better); i.e., Christians must recognize the claim that the authorities have upon them. But see also Acts 5:29: "Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'" See also Mark 12:13-17.

**13:3-4** Paul is not discussing governments that are unjust and which punish good works and praise evil.

**13:4 *good*.** "The ruler helps the Christian toward 'the good' which God has in store for him, toward salvation (we take it that it is salvation to which, mainly at any rate 'the good' in the verse refers), if he is a just ruler, by providing him with encouragement to do good and discouragement from doing evil, and by curbing the worst excesses of other men's sinfulness and providing them with selfish reasons for acting justly" (Cranfield).

**13:5 *conscience*.** Since the Christian knows that the ruler has been appointed by God, to disobey would create a guilty conscience.

**13:7 *taxes*.** Local taxes such as duty, import/export taxes, taxes for the use of roads or for the right to drive a cart, etc. **revenue.** Any tribute, paid by members of a subject nation to Rome, consisting usually of three types: a general tax on agricultural produce, a 1% income tax, and a poll tax paid by everyone between the ages of 14 and 65.

## Caring Time

1. In what way can you honor an authority in your life this week?
2. Have someone lead the group in prayer for the leaders of our country.
3. How can the group support you in prayer this week?

