


Bible Study Lesson: Romans 13:1–10

Theme: Living as Kingdom Citizens in Earthly Systems

Audience: Adults or youth with basic biblical understanding

Setting: Church group, outreach event, or civic engagement workshop

 Scripture Focus Romans 13:1-10 New International Version

Submission to Governing Authorities

13 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ²Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³For 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 you will be commended. ⁴For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

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

⁸Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet,"^[a] and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."^[b] ¹⁰Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Lesson Overview

This passage challenges believers to live responsibly under earthly authority while fulfilling the higher law of love. Paul addresses how Christians should relate to government, law, and one another—especially in times of tension or transition.

Key Themes & Insights

1. Submission to Authority (vv. 1–2)

- God establishes all authority—even imperfect systems.
- Rebellion against lawful authority can reflect rebellion against God’s order.
- Discussion: What does godly submission look like in unjust systems?

2. Purpose of Government (vv. 3–4)

- Civil authorities are meant to promote good and restrain evil.
- Believers should not fear rulers if they do what is right.
- Reflection: How can Christians influence government to fulfill its God-given role?

3. Conscience and Civic Duty (vv. 5–7)

- Obedience isn’t just about avoiding punishment—it’s about honoring God.
- Paying taxes, respecting laws, and honoring leaders are spiritual acts.
- Application: How does your civic engagement reflect your faith?

4. The Law of Love (vv. 8–10)

- Love fulfills the law—more than rules, it’s about relationship.
- Loving others means not harming them, not exploiting them, and seeking their good.
- Challenge: Are there areas where you owe love to someone you’ve overlooked?

Deep Dive Questions

Use these for small group discussion or journaling:

1. How do you reconcile submission to authority with standing against injustice?
2. What does it mean to “owe no one anything except to love them” in practical terms?
3. How can believers model respectful dissent when laws conflict with God’s commands?
4. What role does conscience play in your decisions as a citizen and a Christian?

Real-Life Application

Encourage participants to:

- Pray for local and national leaders—even those they disagree with.

- Volunteer in civic spaces (e.g., school boards, community events) as a witness of Christ's love.
- Practice radical love in daily interactions—especially with those who are hard to love.

Worship Tie-In

Consider closing with a gospel song like “Love Lifted Me” or “I Need You to Survive” to reinforce the theme of love and unity.

Closing Prayer

“Lord, help us to live as faithful citizens of both heaven and earth. Teach us to honor authority, love our neighbors, and reflect Your justice and mercy in all we do. May our lives be a testimony of Your kingdom come. Amen.”