



Must Christians Obey Every Law of the Land?

The more complex our society gets, the more it seems we are encumbered with a multitude of governmental rules and regulations. There are property laws, traffic laws, business laws, tax laws, etc., to the point that we often feel bogged down with unnecessary bureaucratic "red tape." Some people think we are at liberty to simply ignore some laws while being obligated to abide by others. Others resent government intrusion into our private lives and feel they must resist. Just where does the Christian draw the line? What does the Bible have to say about a Christian's responsibility in obeying "the laws of the land?"

Three primary Bible passages focus on this issue. They are:

- Romans 13:1-6
- Titus 3:1-2
- 1 Peter 2:13-14

Take a few moments to read these passages, then consider the issues raised by the questions below. Before you speculate or state your opinion, try to get your answers from the Bible.

1. What should be our general attitude toward governing authorities and the laws they set up?

2. Who ultimately establishes governing authorities?

3. What do you know about the Roman government that the Christians were under that would shed light on what Paul and Peter meant by these instructions?

4. What specific example of submission to governing authorities is given in Romans 13:6-7.

5. What if I don't agree with the way my tax money is being spent? Do I still have to pay?

6. What recourse do I have if I don't agree with how the money is spent?

7. Is it right for a Christian to take advantage of legal loopholes and special tax shelters for being sure he or she pays only a "fair share?"

8. What if my tax money is being spent for things that are immoral?

9. What reasons are given in these verses for obeying governing authorities?

10. What is likely to happen if I resist governing authorities?

11. What specific laws are to be obeyed? What about traffic laws such as the speed limit? What about building laws pertaining to zones and permits? What about reporting "cash" income when filing taxes? What about radar detectors on automobiles?

12. When I disobey the "law of the land" whom am I really disobeying?

13. Are there any exceptions to the requirement to obey governing authorities? Consider Acts 4:17-20 and Acts 5:27-29. If these are indeed exceptions, what guidelines are evident?

14. What area(s) of your life need to be brought into harmony with this teaching?