

Discussion Starters for Eleven Insights Gleaned from Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17

This list has been adapted from a Word Foundations article available at <https://bit.ly/3cQsdmg>.

Here are some suggested questions for discussion and/or reflection:

- 1. Where is this item represented in each of the two primary passages (Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17), or in the one in which it appears?**
- 2. Is the principle named explicit or implicit in the biblical text?**
- 3. How might this item align with the theme of limited government?**
- 4. What comments or questions do you have about this item?**

1. Everyone is to obey governmental authorities.
2. Governments and the leaders who represent them are “appointed by God”; therefore, resisting them is resisting “the ordinance of God.”
3. God will judge those who disobey civil authorities.
4. Government's power is not absolute, however. Governments and their leaders have the authority they have because God has *delegated* it to them.
5. God has delegated authority to government and its human representatives so they can and will commend those who do good and punish those who do evil. *Good* and *evil* here mean good and evil according to God's standard, not man's.
6. God wants nations to maintain societal order. One of the reasons for this, according to 1 Timothy 2:1-4, is so people will live in social environments that don't distract them from hearing the gospel and responding positively to it.
7. Government has other legitimate tasks, such as maintaining a military force to defend the country and maintaining monetary and economic systems. These are implicitly affirmed in the Bible (for examples, see Deut. 20:1; Matt. 22:15-22). What government is *not* authorized to do in Scripture is provide for its people. That is a job God gives to the people themselves.*
8. God wants the people of a country to be free, to enjoy authentic liberty. Such liberty is tied to obedience to His laws.
9. God does not give civil leaders authority to rule arbitrarily. They are accountable to Him and His laws. Moreover, Christians have a primary duty to obey God. If commands from government and God directly conflict, Christians must obey God. This means that in certain situations, believers are right to engage in civil disobedience.
10. As Christians who live in the United States of America, we must interpret Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 in light of our form of government. The United States is a republic, a nation ruled by laws. Both leaders and citizens are under the law of the land. Furthermore, leaders are accountable to the people, for government and its representatives derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed."
11. In a free society such as ours, we as Christians can and must hold our leaders accountable. This means participating in the political process, seeking to influence leaders to lead wisely and well, and pushing back with as much influence as possible when they misuse or abuse their authority.

*See Gen. 2:15; Ex. 20:8-9; Prov. 6:6-11; 12:14; 14:23; Eccl. 3:13; 5:12; Rom. 12:11; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:6-12; 1 Tim. 5:3-8.