

# The **Bible** Unpacked

## **Comprehensive Study Series**

A compilation of the Bible's teaching  
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison



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## **Comprehensive Study Series**

A compilation of the Bible's teaching  
for believers established in the faith

## **34. Common Relationships**

**Composed by Paul Mallison**

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## A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)

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## Suggestions for Study Groups

### Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

### Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

### General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
  - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
  - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?



# I. Family Relationships

The Bible contains discerning insights and directions regarding relationships with those who are closest to us. As such these teachings are among the ones which are the most often applicable to our lives.

## a) Prologue: Getting Married

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### Issues in deciding whether to stay single or to marry: General; . . .

**1COR 7:1–2** [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] Now, to deal with the matters you wrote about. *A man does well not to marry.* <sup>2</sup>*But because there is so much immorality, every man should have his own wife, and every woman should have her own husband.* GNT

In v. 1, Paul may have in mind staying single so as to be devoted to God's kingdom (cf. vv. 7; 32–35 ↓) and/or for one's own sake (cf. vv. 26–28, 40). Alternatively, he may simply be quoting a statement the Corinthians had written. In v. 2 Paul apparently is referring to extensive sexual immorality that was prevalent in Corinth at the time. He raises the immorality as a reason to have one's own spouse, to satisfy one's sexual desires (cf. vv. 3–5) and so to help avoid the immorality.

### . . . Forsaking marriage for Jesus Christ

**1COR 7:32–35** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *I would like you to be free from worry. An unmarried man concerns himself with the Lord's work, because he is trying to please the Lord.* <sup>33</sup>*But a married man concerns himself with worldly matters, because he wants to please his wife;* <sup>34</sup>*and so he is pulled in two directions. An unmarried woman or a virgin concerns herself with the Lord's work, because she wants to be dedicated both in body and spirit; but a married woman concerns herself with worldly matters, because she wants to please her husband.* <sup>35</sup>*I am saying this because I want to help you. I am not trying to put restrictions on you. Instead, I want you to do what is right and proper, and to give yourselves completely to the Lord's service without any reservation.* GNT

Paul effectively is urging those who are single to remain as such, so as to be completely devoted to the Lord.

### Do not marry outside of God's people – particularly as it can result in being led astray

**2COR 6:14–15** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Do not become partners with those who do not believe, for what partnership is there between*

*righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?* <sup>15</sup>*And what agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share in common with an unbeliever?*

**DEUT 7:3–4** [MOSES, WARNING THE ISRAELITES ABOUT INTERMARRIAGE WITH PAGAN NATIONS:] *You must not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup>for they will turn your sons away from me to worship other gods.* Then the anger of the LORD will erupt against you and he will quickly destroy you.

Such warnings to Israel are at least to some extent applicable to believers marrying outside of God’s people, i.e. marrying a non-believer. For in doing so one runs the risk of compromising one’s devotion to God.

### **A person should have only one spouse**

**TITUS 1:6** An elder must *be blameless, the husband of one wife*, with faithful children who cannot be charged with dissipation or rebellion.

### **Remarriage and adultery**

**MATT 19:9** [JESUS:] And I say to you: *whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.*

ESV

**MATT 5:32** [JESUS:] But I say to you that *everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

ESV

The assertion that a man who divorces his wife actually “makes her commit adultery”, may have in view the need and inevitability of remarriage for a woman in ancient times in order to have a means of provision.

What factors should a single Christian consider in deciding if they should not marry for the sake of the Lord?

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Is it wrong to date or “go steady” with a non-Christian?

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Is it permissible to remarry after divorce?

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## b) Spouses (I): General

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### **A husband and wife should be as one, which involves sexual union**

**GEN 2:22–24** The LORD God used the rib from the man [Adam] to make a woman [Eve], and then he brought the woman to the man.<sup>23</sup> And the man said, “Now, *this is someone whose bones came from my bones, whose body came from my body. I will call her ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of man.*”<sup>24</sup> *So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.* NCV™

Just as originally the man and the woman were of the one body (vv. 22–23), so a husband and wife will be united as “one body” (v. 24). The term “one body” appears to encompass a oneness in spirit, and is signified and expressed through sexual bonding. The use of the term also implies a lifelong, monogamous relationship.

### **Husbands should love their wives**

**EPH 5:25, 33** *Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her ...*<sup>33</sup> *Nevertheless, each one of you must also love his own wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

The directive for husbands to love their wives “just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her” (v. 25) is both daunting and inspirational. It calls for a love that is ever persistent and is all surpassing, even to the point of sacrificing one’s life.

### **Wives should submit to their husbands**

**EPH 5:22–24** *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*<sup>23</sup> *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*<sup>24</sup> *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* ESV

Such submission should be voluntary and willing. The corresponding authority of the husband is not about control and should only be practiced in a Christ-like manner and in love, which should characterize all he does in relating to his wife.

## **Do not commit adultery – which brings God’s judgment**

**Ex 20:14** *You shall not commit adultery.*

**HEB 13:4** *Let marriage be kept honorable in every way, and the marriage bed undefiled. For God will judge those who commit sexual sins, especially those who commit adultery.* ISV

## **Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God’s purposes**

**MATT 19:3–8** Then some Pharisees came to him [Jesus] in order to test him. *They asked, “Is it lawful to divorce a wife for any cause?”* <sup>4</sup>*He answered, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female,* <sup>5</sup>*and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?* <sup>6</sup>*So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”* <sup>7</sup>They said to him, “Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?” <sup>8</sup>*Jesus said to them, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of your hard hearts, but from the beginning it was not this way.*

The implication of the two OT quotations (vv. 4–5), as made clear in v. 6, is that God has purposed that husband and wife be one – which divorce is contrary to. Moses permitted divorce because of people’s “hard-hearted wickedness” (NLT), with their innate unwillingness or incapacity to embrace his teaching (cf. GNT, NCV). But the permitting of divorce was not part of God’s original purpose (v. 8; cf. CEV, NLT), and as such falls well short of what is ideal.

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What are some specific things husbands should do in applying the teaching regarding loving their wives?

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To what extent should wives submit to their husbands?

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Can divorce ever be the best option for Christian spouses? If so, when? If not, why not?

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## c) Spouses (II): Romantic Love

Note that most of the verses in this section are from the book “Song of Songs” (or “Song of Solomon”). Bear in mind that it is largely composed of speech by a man and a woman, possibly from both their courtship and marriage.

### The marvel of love

**PROV 30:18–19** [AGUR:] *There are three things that are too hard for me, really four I don’t understand:* <sup>19</sup>the way an eagle flies in the sky, the way a snake slides over a rock, the way a ship sails on the sea, and *the way a man and a woman fall in love.* NCV™

**SONG 8:6B–7** *For love is as strong as death, passion is as unrelenting as Sheol. Its flames burst forth, it is a blazing flame. <sup>7</sup>Surging waters cannot quench love; floodwaters cannot overflow it. If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy love, the offer would be utterly despised.*

The Hebrew translated here as “a blazing flame” (v. 6b) has been interpreted by some to allude to God as being the source of love (cf. AMP, ESV, ISV, NASB). Verse 7b indicates that love cannot be bought. It points to love’s incalculable worth and shows that it is beyond the realm of riches.

### Spouses and their love belong exclusively to each other

**SONG 2:16** [THE WOMAN:] *My lover is mine and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.*

**PROV 5:15–19** *Drink water from your own cistern, and fresh water from your own well. <sup>16</sup>Should your springs flow outside, or streams of water in the street? <sup>17</sup>They should be for you alone and not for strangers with you. <sup>18</sup>Let your fountain be blessed and enjoy the wife of your youth. <sup>19</sup>Like a loving deer and a beautiful doe, let her breasts satisfy you all the time. Be constantly intoxicated by her love.* ISV

There are different interpretations of the imagery in verses 16–17, but it is clear that their basic thrust is that one should enjoy sexual relationships exclusively with one’s spouse. This also appears to be the main thought behind the rest of the passage.

## Further insights on love

**SONG 2:7** [THE WOMAN:] I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the young does of the open fields: *Do not awaken or arouse love until it pleases!*

One should not try to stimulate or forcibly ignite love; such love is at best superficial and not true love. Love is spontaneous and instinctive; it comes when “it pleases” – when “it is ready” (CEV, NCV, NRSV).

**SONG 5:16B** [THE WOMAN:] Yes, daughters of Jerusalem, *this is my lover and my friend.* NCV™

This reflects the fact that friendship is an important aspect of romantic love.

## Examples and declarations of love

**GEN 29:20** So Jacob worked for Laban seven years so he could marry Rachel. But they seemed like just a few days to him because he loved Rachel very much. NCV™

**SONG 2:5** [THE WOMAN:] *Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love.*

**SONG 4:9** [THE MAN:] *You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride! You have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.*

## Desire for and enjoyment of sexual intimacy with one's lover

**SONG 4:6** [THE MAN:] *Until the dawn arrives and the shadows flee, I will go up to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

**SONG 5:1A** [THE MAN:] *I have entered my garden, O my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my balsam spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk!*

As illustrated in the above verses, Song of Songs contains beautiful but also sensual poetry, but is never crude. The sensual parts are often comprised of imagery, notably imagery involving sensuous aspects of nature. This is exemplified in the above verses by the use of metaphors for the woman/wife with her pleasures.

What is so hard to understand about “the way a man and a woman fall in love” (Prov 30:18–19)?

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What is meant by “Do not awaken or arouse love until it pleases” (Song of Songs 2:7)?

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What other aspects of marriage promote enjoyable sexual intimacy?

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## **d) Parents' Duties to Children (I): Love and Care**

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### **Parents should love their children . . .**

**TITUS 2:4** [PAUL, SPEAKING OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:] In this way they [older women] will train the younger women to love their husbands, *to love their children, . . .*

**PROV 13:24** The one who spares his rod hates his child, but *the one who loves his child* is diligent in disciplining him.

This implies that one ought to love one's child.

### **. . . and parents should have compassion on their children**

**PS 103:13** *As a father has compassion on his children,* so the LORD has compassion on his faithful followers.

**ISA 49:15A** Can a woman forget her baby who nurses at her breast? *Can she withhold compassion from the child she has borne?*

### **Parents should care for their children**

**1THES 2:7** [PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] But we were gentle when we were with you, *like a mother taking care of her children.* GNT

**DEUT 1:31B** [MOSES, SPEAKING TO THE ISRAELITES OF GOD'S CARE:] You saw how *he brought you safely all the way to this place, just as a father would carry his son.* GNT

### **As such, parents should provide for their children . . .**

**PROV 31:15, 21** She [a wife of noble character] also gets up while it is still night, and *provides food for her household* and a portion to her female servants. . . . <sup>21</sup>*She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all of her household are clothed with scarlet.*

The reference to being "clothed with scarlet" (v. 21) appears to refer to quality, warm clothing (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NlrV, NLT).

**. . . and parents should pray for their children**

**1CHR 29:19** [DAVID, TO GOD:] *Make my son Solomon willing to obey your commands, rules, and regulations, and to complete building the palace for which I have made preparations.*

**MARK 5:22–23** Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came up, and *when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet.* <sup>23</sup>*He asked him urgently, “My little daughter is near death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be healed and live.”*

The father’s request of Jesus on behalf of his daughter is effectively an example of a parent’s prayer for their child.

What aspects of your parents’ love and care did you value and feel you should imitate?

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What can a parent do in order to love a child in times when they find it difficult to do so?

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What is one tip you would give to parents to help them pray more regularly and effectively for their children?

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## e) Parents' Duties to Children (II): Godly Training

**Parents should raise their children to live as God wants . . .**

**EPH 6:4** Fathers, do not make your children angry, but *raise them with the training and teaching of the Lord.* NCV™

**DEUT 32:46B** [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] Keep in mind all the words I am solemnly proclaiming to you today; *you must command your children to observe carefully all the words of this law.*

**. . . In doing so, parents should discipline their children**

**PROV 19:18** *Discipline your children while they are young enough to learn. If you don't, you are helping them to destroy themselves.* GNT

**HEB 12:9A** Besides this, *we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.* ESV

**Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to obey God . . .**

**PS 78:4B–7** *We will tell the next generation about the LORD's praiseworthy acts, about his strength and the amazing things he has done. <sup>5</sup>He established a rule in Jacob; he set up a law in Israel. He commanded our ancestors to make his deeds known to their descendants, <sup>6</sup>so that the next generation, children yet to be born, might know about them. They will grow up and tell their descendants about them. <sup>7</sup>Then they will place their confidence in God. They will not forget the works of God, and they will obey his commands.*

This speaks of parents telling their children of God's deeds and power. Verse 7 then concludes that in light of God's wonderful deeds for them, the children would trust God and obey his commands.

**. . . Similarly, parents should promote faith in their children**

(➔ Ps 78:7 ↑)

**2TIM 3:14–15** [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] You, however, must *continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you <sup>15</sup>and how from infancy you have known the holy writings,*

*which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Particularly in the light of the reference to Timothy having known the Scriptures “from infancy” (v. 15), “who taught you” (v. 14) would be inclusive of – and probably primarily speaking of – Timothy’s grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (cf. 2Tim 1:5). By likewise teaching children the Scriptures, parents work towards giving them “wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 15).

What should disciplining of children involve?

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How should parents promote faith in their children?

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Are there any common mistakes that parents should avoid in training and/or teaching their children?

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## f) Children's Duties to Parents

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### Children are to honor and respect their parents

**EPH 6:2–3** *“Honor your father and mother,”* which is the first commandment accompanied by a promise, namely, <sup>3</sup>“that it may go well with you and that you will live a long time on the earth.”

**LEV 19:3** [GOD:] *Each of you must respect his mother and his father, and you must keep my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.*

### Children are to obey their parents . . .

**COL 3:20** *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* ESV

### . . . and children should heed their parents' teaching – which brings great benefits

**PROV 6:20–23** [A WISE FATHER, TO HIS SON:] *My son, keep your father's commands, and don't forget your mother's teaching.* <sup>21</sup>*Keep their words in mind forever as though you had them tied around your neck.* <sup>22</sup>*They will guide you when you walk. They will guard you when you sleep. They will speak to you when you are awake.* <sup>23</sup>*These commands are like a lamp; this teaching is like a light. And the correction that comes from them will help you have life.* NCV™

“They will guard you when you sleep” (v. 22) speaks of the security or protection that living by such teaching provides.

### Children are to help their parents . . .

**1TIM 5:4** *But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to fulfill their duty toward their own household and so repay their parents what is owed them. For this is what pleases God.*

### . . . Indeed, one should assist any relative in need

**1TIM 5:8** [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] *If anyone does not take care of his own relatives, especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* ISV

What are some ways in which children can honor their parents?

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Are there any commands or teachings of your parents that you find/found hard to accept? If they were valid ones, how could you better impart them to your children?

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What other things could you do for your parents and/or grandparents?

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## II. Civil Relationships

In addition to relationships with family members, the Bible looks at other relationships which have a marked effect on our lives. In doing so, it gives wise and challenging teaching regarding relationships between citizens and governing authorities, and between employees and employers.

## a) Citizens' Duties to Authorities

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### **Citizens should submit to and obey the governing authorities, . . .**

**TITUS 3:1** [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TITUS WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVERS:] Remind them *to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient*, to be ready for every good work.

As with the command “be subject to”, the command to “be obedient” is also given in regard to “rulers and authorities”.

### **. . . for the authorities have been established by God and they will punish wrongdoers**

**ROM 13:1–3** *Every person should obey the government in power. No government would exist if it hadn't been established by God. The governments which exist have been put in place by God. <sup>2</sup>Therefore, whoever resists the government opposes what God has established. Those who resist will bring punishment on themselves. <sup>3</sup>People who do what is right don't have to be afraid of the government. But people who do what is wrong should be afraid of it.* GW

### **However, citizens should defy any command that conflicts with God's will**

**DAN 3:28** Nebuchadnezzar spoke up and said: ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! He sent his angel to deliver his servants who trusted in him. *They disobeyed the king's command and were willing to risk their lives in order not to serve or worship any god except their own God.* ISV

**ACTS 5:27–29** When they brought back the apostles, they made them stand in front of the council. The chief priest questioned them. <sup>28</sup>*He said, “We gave you strict orders not to mention Jesus' name when you teach. Yet, you've filled Jerusalem with your teachings. You want to take revenge on us for putting that man to death.”* <sup>29</sup>*Peter and the other apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than people.* GW

**Citizens should honor authorities**

**1PET 2:17** *Show respect for all people: Love the brothers and sisters of God’s family, respect God, honor the king.* NCV™

**Citizens should pray for authorities**

**1TIM 2:1–2** [PAUL:] *First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people,<sup>2</sup> even for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*

Can you recall a time when you did not submit to or obey the governing authorities? Was this justifiable?

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In the light of Romans 13:1–2, what if anything should Christians do about tyrannical governments?

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Is there anything that you think Christians generally (or yourself in particular) should do better in regard to governing authorities?

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## **b) Authorities' Duties to Citizens (I): General**

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### **Governing authorities should act and rule according to God's law and ways**

**DEUT 17:18–20** [MOSES, GIVING INSTRUCTIONS FOR A KING:] *When he sits on his royal throne he must make a copy of this law on a scroll given to him by the Levitical priests.* <sup>19</sup>*It must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out.* <sup>20</sup>*Then he will not exalt himself above his fellow citizens or turn from the commandments to the right or left, and he and his descendants will enjoy many years ruling over his kingdom in Israel.*

**2KI 18:3** *And he [King Hezekiah] did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.* ESV

### **Authorities should rule as servants of God and of their people**

**ROM 13:3B–4** [PAUL:] *Would you like to be unafraid of those in authority? Then do what is good, and they will praise you,* <sup>4</sup>*because they are God's servants working for your own good.* *But if you do evil, then be afraid of them, because their power to punish is real. They are God's servants and carry out God's punishment on those who do evil.* GNT

**1KI 12:7** *And they said to him [King Rehoboam], "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever."* ESV

### **Authorities should rule wisely . . .**

**2CHR 11:23** *And he [a king] dealt wisely and distributed some of his sons through all the districts of Judah and Benjamin, in all the fortified cities, and he gave them abundant provisions and procured wives for them.* ESV

**JER 3:15** [GOD, TO ISRAEL:] *I will give you leaders who will be faithful to me. They will lead you with knowledge and insight.*

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**. . . As such, authorities need to be wise**

**DEUT 1:13** [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *Select wise and practical men, those known among your tribes, whom I may appoint as your leaders.*

**Note: Further traits that should characterize authorities**

**PROV 20:28** *Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.* ESV

**JOSH 1:6, 9** [GOD, TO JOSHUA:] *Be strong and brave! You must lead these people in the conquest of this land that I solemnly promised their ancestors I would hand over to them. . . .*<sup>9</sup>*I repeat, be strong and brave! Don't be afraid and don't panic, for I, the LORD your God, am with you in all you do.*

If a proposed law is not in accordance with God's law and ways, what things can you do about it?

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What indicators should we look for in assessing if a political candidate is wise?

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Are you in a position of authority over others? If so, how can you improve on how you relate to those under your authority?

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## **c) Authorities' Duties to Citizens (II): Justice**

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### **Authorities should rule justly**

**2SAM 8:15** *David reigned over all Israel; he guaranteed justice for all his people.*

**2CHR 9:8B** [THE QUEEN OF SHEBA TO KING SOLOMON:] *Because of your God's love for Israel and his lasting commitment to them, he made you king over them so you could make just and right decisions.*

### **Authorities should defend the needy**

**PS 72:4** *He [a Davidic king] will defend the oppressed among the people; he will deliver the children of the poor and crush the oppressor.*

**PROV 31:8–9** [INSTRUCTIONS TO A KING:] *“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of all those who have nothing. <sup>9</sup>Speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and needy.”* NCV™

### **So, authorities should not rule unjustly . . .**

**EZEK 45:9** *This is what the sovereign LORD says: Enough, you princes of Israel! Put away violence and destruction, and do what is just and right. Put an end to your evictions of my people, declares the sovereign LORD.*

### **. . . Unjust rule brings God's judgment**

**ISA 10:1–3** [GOD:] *Those who enact unjust policies are as good as dead, those who are always instituting unfair regulations, <sup>2</sup>to keep the poor from getting fair treatment, and to deprive the oppressed among my people of justice, so they can steal what widows own, and loot what belongs to orphans. <sup>3</sup>What will you do on judgment day, when destruction arrives from a distant place? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your wealth?*

**Various insights on unjust rule**

**PROV 17:7** *Excessive speech is not becoming for a fool; how much less are lies for a ruler!*

**PROV 28:15–16A** *Like a roaring lion or a roving bear, so is a wicked ruler over a poor people. <sup>16</sup>The prince who is a great oppressor lacks wisdom ...*

Verse 15 illustrates the viciousness and destructiveness of a wicked ruler.

What steps can we take to encourage our leaders to do more to help the needy? Are there any particular things that you are aware of that they should do?

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What can we do on behalf of citizens in other countries who are not treated justly by the authorities (e.g. Christians persecuted by their government)?

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What pressures do politicians have to sometimes not answer truthfully? What reasons are there for them to tell the truth at such times?

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## d) Servants and Masters

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A number of verses in this section refer to slaves rather than servants. Generally the teaching regarding one of them is also very much applicable to the other.

### Servants should obey and respect their masters

**COL 3:22** *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect, not only when they are watching – like those who are strictly people-pleasers – but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord.*

**1PET 2:18** *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.* ESV

### Servants should be trustworthy and faithful

**TITUS 2:10** *They [slaves] should not steal from them but should show their masters they can be fully trusted so that in everything they do they will make the teaching of God our Savior attractive.* NCV™

**MATT 25:20–21** *And he [a servant] who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’<sup>21</sup> His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’* ESV

### Good service is rewarded

(⇒ Matt 25:21 ↑)

**PROV 17:2** *A servant who acts wisely will rule over an heir who behaves shamefully, and will share the inheritance along with the relatives.*

**COL 3:23–24** *Do your work willingly, as though you were serving the Lord himself, and not just your earthly master.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the Lord Christ is the one you are really serving, and you know that he will reward you.* CEV

**Masters must treat servants justly . . .**

**COL 4:1** *Masters, treat your slaves with justice and fairness, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.*

**LEV 25:43** *Do not treat them harshly, but obey your God.* GNT

**. . . As such, masters should pay servants their wages**

**LEV 19:13B** *You must not withhold the wages of the hired laborer overnight until morning.*

**MAL 3:5** The LORD All-Powerful says, “Then *I will come to you and judge you. I will be quick to testify against those who take part in evil magic, adultery, and lying under oath, those who cheat workers of their pay and who cheat widows and orphans, those who are unfair to foreigners, and those who do not respect me.* NCV™

**Note: Slavery is to be avoided and slave trading is evil**

**1COR 7:23** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men.*

**1TIM 1:9B–10** *It [the law] is for people who are against God and are sinful, who are not holy ...<sup>10</sup>...who sell slaves, who tell lies, who speak falsely, and who do anything against the true teaching of God.*  
NCV™

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How can we show respect to those in authority over us?

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Of the things mentioned that servants should do, which do you do best at in relating to your employer or boss at work? Which do you need to improve at?

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If you are in a position of authority over others at your work, what is one thing that you find difficult in relating to those under you – or perhaps to one in particular? What can you do about this?

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## Topics in This Series

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- II. God's Pre-Eminence

##### **2. God's Character**

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##### **3. Jesus Christ**

- I. General
- II. Jesus Christ and God

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##### **5. Angels, Satan and Demons**

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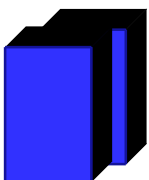
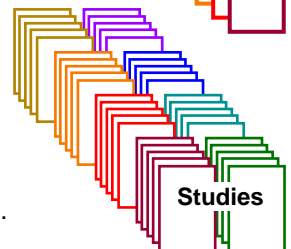
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Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

### **Barnabas Fund** – [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

### **Christian Faith and Freedom** – [www.cffreedom.org](http://www.cffreedom.org)

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity International** – [www.csi-int.org](http://www.csi-int.org)

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity Worldwide** – [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

### **Compass Direct** – [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org)

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

### **Open Doors** – [sb.od.org](http://sb.od.org); [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

### **Religious Liberty Commission** – [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/); [www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx](http://www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx)

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org)  
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to [join-rlpb@hub.xc.org](mailto:join-rlpb@hub.xc.org).

### **The Bible League** – [www.bibleleague.org/persecuted](http://www.bibleleague.org/persecuted); [www.bibleleague.com](http://www.bibleleague.com)

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

### **Voice of the Martyrs** – [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com); [www.persecution.com.au](http://www.persecution.com.au)

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

*Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.'* Matthew 25:40 NCV



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