

Honor

BELIEVERS' HIGHEST CALLING IS TO HONOR GOD IN EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR LIVES.

Matthew 22:15-22,34-40

15 Then the **Pharisees** **A** went and plotted how to **trap him** **B** by what he said. **16** So they sent their disciples to him, along with the **Herodians**. **C** “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are truthful and teach truthfully the **way of God**. **D** You don’t care what anyone thinks nor do you show **partiality**. **E** **17** Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to **pay taxes to Caesar** **F** or not?” **18** Perceiving their malicious intent, Jesus said, “Why are you testing me, **hypocrites**? **G** **19** Show me the coin used for the tax.” They brought him a denarius. **20** “Whose **image and inscription** **H** is this?” he asked them. **21** “Caesar’s,” they said to him. Then he said to them, “**Give**, **I** then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” **22** When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away. [. . .] **34** When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the **Sadducees**, **J** they came together. **35** And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: **36** “Teacher, which command in the law is **the greatest**?” **K** **37** He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. **38** This is the greatest and most important command. **39** The **second is like it**: **L** Love your neighbor as yourself. **40** **All the Law and the Prophets** **M** depend on these two commands.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** The largest religious group in Israel. Pharisees focused on keeping the law and the oral traditions more than on political issues.
- B** “Entangle him” (KJV; ESV). This is the only time this Greek word (*pagideuó*) appears in the New Testament. It suggests a hunter setting a snare.
- C** Jews who were loyal to Herod Antipas. The Herodians likely viewed Jesus as a political, not religious, threat.
- D** The ethical demands of God’s law, similar to “the way of righteousness” (Matt. 21:32).
- E** “Regardest not the person of men” (KJV); “not swayed by appearances” (ESV). Jesus was not influenced by popular opinion.
- F** Probably an annual one-denarius tax paid by all men and women who were not Roman citizens.
- G** Originally, an actor who performs wearing a mask. By the first century, it carried a moral connotation related to insincerity or false virtue.
- H** The denarius had an image of the emperor on one side and the inscription of “God and High Priest” on the other.
- I** “Render” (KJV; ESV). To give what is rightfully due. Caesar was due the tax, but that did not diminish one’s ability to honor and worship God.
- J** The wealthy, priestly class. Sadducees were more political and controlled the temple.
- K** Jewish scholars often debated how to rank commands in the law.
- L** Quoting Leviticus 19:18, Jesus placed loving your neighbor alongside loving God. One cannot love God without loving neighbors (1 John 4:20).
- M** The entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures rests on the foundation of loving God and loving others.



Government Authority (Matt. 22:15-22)

- The Pharisees and Herodians wanted to catch Jesus in a verbal trap so they could arrest and condemn Him. They asked Him if it was “lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not” (v. 17).
- If Jesus approved of paying taxes, it could be viewed as support for the Roman occupation. If He rejected the taxes, it could be viewed as treason against Rome.
- Jesus stunned them with His answer: Give human governments what they are due, and give God all that He is due.

God’s Authority (Matt. 22:34-40)

- Later, another Pharisee, an expert in the law, approached Jesus and asked Him to identify the greatest commandment.
- Jesus replied that the greatest command was to love God with the entirety of one’s being. However, He followed this with a second command to love one’s neighbor as oneself.
- He emphasized that all of the commands and teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures relied on these directives to love God and love others.

Summary Statements

Believers’ highest calling is to honor God in every aspect of their lives.

- We are called to submit to government officials and laws.
- We are to honor God exclusively as the one true God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Memory Verse

Matthew 22:37-38

Key Doctrine

The Christian and Social Order

Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. (See Romans 13:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:1-2.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

What is your highest allegiance in life? (PSG, p. 89)

- For years in schools across America, each morning began with saying the Pledge of Allegiance. As children, we were taught to honor and respect the American flag and the nation it represented.
- That is one of many allegiances in life. We give honor and loyalty to any number of causes and people. The critical issue is how we select what we honor. Allegiance to wrong things leads to potential disaster.
- Allegiance to honorable things can result in more joy and fulfillment in life. Choose wisely.

Bonus: What are some patriotic symbols? What makes these symbols so significant to us?

EXPLORE

GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY (MATT. 22:15-22)

What does it look like to honor our government in today's culture? (PSG, p. 93)

- Once again, the religious leaders were trying to trap Jesus. In order to hide their scheme, they sent their “disciples” to Him. They were joined by the Herodians, a group of Jews who were loyal to Herod and friendly with the Romans. Normally, these two groups hated one another, but they saw Jesus as a common threat.
- The confrontation began with flattery: “we know that you are truthful.” Their hook was covered with honey to catch Jesus off guard. The flattery continued when they said Jesus could not be swayed by what others think.
- Their question would have caught the attention of most Jews: Was it lawful to “pay taxes to Caesar?” Jews despised Roman taxation because it reminded them of the Empire’s occupation. Plus, the coin used to pay the tax—a denarius—carried Caesar’s image and an inscription that proclaimed him as “God and High Priest.”
- Jesus’s foes believed they had Him in a corner. If He answered “yes,” the people likely would turn on Him. If he said “no,” He could be accused of treason.
- Recognizing their malice, Jesus called the Pharisees and Herodians out as “hypocrites.” He also called for someone to bring Him a denarius so He could make His point.
- Jesus said to “Give . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” The idea was to give both Caesar and God what they were due.
- Jesus recognized the legitimate responsibility of His people to obey the government, including the payment of taxes. But believers’ ultimate duty is to honor and worship God, the Creator and Giver of all things. Jesus’s response laid a foundation for Christianity’s relationship with the government moving forward (see Rom. 13:1-7).

Bonus: How do you struggle with honoring the government? How does Jesus’s teaching alter your thinking?

GOD’S AUTHORITY (MATT. 22:34-40)

Bonus: If a friend asked you what God cared about most, how would you respond?

- Later, an “expert in the law” tested Jesus with another question: “Which command in the law is the greatest?” The rabbis taught that Moses received 613 laws on Mount Sinai, and they often debated how to prioritize them.
- Jesus answered the question directly. Quoting the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-5), He said that God’s people must love the Lord “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Mark’s Gospel added “strength” to the list. Loving God wholeheartedly is the “greatest and most important” command.
- Jesus added a second command. From Leviticus 19:18, He said we should “love your neighbor as yourself.” These twin commands emphasize both our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with others. Our love is incomplete if one (or both) is lacking.
- Jesus also shared that “all the Law and the Prophets” hung on these truths. Without love for God and love for others, genuine faith is worthless and collapses.

What’s at the heart of this command to love other people? What does this demonstrate? (PSG, p. 95)

CHALLENGE

As a group, talk about some reasons people might not be giving God His due.

Discuss with your Bible study group various ways followers of Jesus can demonstrate their allegiance to God. (PSG, p. 96)

Challenge adults to consider what areas of their lives are getting the greatest focus these days.

How is God honored in the various aspects of your life? Identify a next step you might take in one of those areas to honor God more. (PSG, p. 96)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 95)

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a Bible passage.

In Matthew 22:17-21, Jesus spoke about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. Compare this to Acts 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Based on all these passages, write a description of the Christian's responsibilities toward government.

Direct attention to the Bible Skill on page 95 of the PSG. Encourage adults to complete the activity, reading and reflecting on the verses mentioned. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their description of a Christian's responsibility toward the government. To supplement the discussion, share the four points from the "Dig Deeper" feature below. Challenge adults to focus on being good citizens, even as they seek ways to give God all the honor and worship He deserves.

OBJECT LESSON: QUARTER

Invite all adults to look at a quarter that you've brought to the Bible study. Encourage volunteers to share some unique qualities that set quarters apart from other coins or currency. Note that some characteristics make quarters unique from coins minted in other countries.

If it is not mentioned, point out that every quarter has some symbol of allegiance to the United States government, but quarters also carry the words "In God we trust." Encourage adults to consider how this aligns with Jesus's command to give the government what the government is due while giving God all that He is due.

Affirm that honoring the government and honoring God are not mutually exclusive for believers. Challenge adults to let the quarter serve as a reminder that Jesus's people are called to honor God and honor our government.

GOD AND GOVERNMENT

The Pharisees and Herodians tried to trap Jesus by asking him about paying taxes. Jesus responded with a simple, yet profound, statement: "Give, then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). This answer provides a foundation for a Christian response to government.

God ordains government. Jesus affirmed the legitimacy of government (Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). While governments vary, the basic principle remains that God has instituted authority to uphold justice, restrain evil, and promote good (Gen. 9:5-7).

God is sovereign over the government. Though Caesar's image was on a coin, every human being bears the image of God (1:27). Jesus's call to "give . . . to God the things that are God's" does not separate the things of Caesar from the things of God. Instead, Jesus affirmed God's sovereignty. Our highest allegiance is to Him; therefore, everything should be submitted to Him.

God has distinct roles for the church and state. God has entrusted human governments with the responsibility of restraining and punishing evil, as well as protecting the lives and possessions of its citizens. Governments are called to promote what is good (Gen. 9:5-7; Rom. 13:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). Meanwhile, God has entrusted the church with proclaiming the gospel and making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). The church does not wield political power, and the state does not govern worship.

God calls Christians to be faithful citizens. Jesus's affirmation to "Give, then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" not only verifies that God ordains government, but it also expresses the expectation that His people should submit to government. Elsewhere in the New Testament, we see the expectation to obey the law (Rom. 13:1-2), pray for leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-2), and engage others in our community as salt and light witnesses (Matt. 5:13-16).