



Represent

Session 11 • Romans 13:1-14



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*) and **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*).

ASK: How have the expectations you grew up with shaped the choices and relationships in your adult life? (p. 93)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 93. Discuss the importance of families. Note that while the way we represent our families is important, how the world sees Jesus in our lives is even more important.

ASK: How faithfully do you represent Jesus?

CONTEXT: Point to “Exhortations for the Christian Life” on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Remind adults that in Romans 12, Paul had talked about personal holiness and how believers should relate to one another. Share that in Romans 13, he turned his attention to those outside the church, especially how Christians relate to authority figures.

- “While we are citizens of heaven, we also live as citizens of earth. Accordingly, we want to represent Christ well in our world so that others will be drawn to Him through

our relationships with them. . . . God instituted government for the good of those who do what is right. In His grand scheme, they are God’s servants to dispense justice in the world (Rom. 13:1-7).” (p. 93)

TRANSITION: *A tension has always existed between church and state, but our response to authority can have a powerful impact on our testimony for Jesus. As you examine today’s verses, determine ways you can do a better job of honoring the authorities God has placed in your life.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

BACKGROUND: Encourage adults to share what comes to their minds when they think of Roman emperors. Share that Christians in the first century dealt with some wicked emperors who consistently persecuted the church, including Caligula (AD 37–41), Claudius (AD 41–54), and Nero (AD 54–68).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 13:1-7** as the group notes how believers are called to relate to governing authorities.

ASK: Based on what you know about Roman leaders from that time, do these directions surprise you? Why?

HIGHLIGHT: Emphasize what Paul shared about a believer's responsibility toward government leaders:

- **(13:1-2)** Our Christian faith does not give us the freedom to flaunt the legal system. At times believers may have to choose obedience to God over government, accepting the consequences. In those cases, we still are subject to the law and must endure the repercussions of our choices. Civil authorities were established by God.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to turn to a neighbor and discuss how these verses relate to the words “honor” and “respect.”

APPLY: Direct attention on **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*). Allow adults to identify specific actions believers can take to honor human authorities. Record responses on the pack item.

ASK: How does Paul's teaching that rulers are God's servants for your good challenge or affirm your perspective on government? (p. 95)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read

Romans 13:8-10 as the group highlights key words or phrases. Invite volunteers to share what they noticed in the verses.

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to list common kinds of debt in our society. List their responses on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on some dangers associated with being in debt.

SHARE: Highlight Paul's reference to our obligation to love others. Talk about how this debt is different from others listed:

- **(13:8)** Beyond taxes owed to government, Paul pointed to a larger debt believers owe—to love one another. Unlike financial debts, the debt of love will never be paid in full. We are always under an obligation to love others. (See also John 13:34-35; Acts 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 John 3:18; 1 Pet. 4:8.)

SAY: *Paul never distinguished between loving saved people and loving lost people. He emphasized that Christ followers are called to love all people. We are called to love others because that love reflects the character and compassion of God, who loves everyone.*

ASK: What are some ways you can practically show love to those around you? (p. 95)

APPLY: Record responses on **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*). Remind adults that love requires action, and challenge them to identify one idea they will put into practice this week.

READ: Read aloud Romans 13:11-14 as the group listens for how believers should respond to the urgency of Christ's return.

ASK: How do you wake up in the morning?

GUIDE: Note that some folks set an alarm, while others wake up on their own. Affirm that many like to hit the “snooze” button. Share that Paul urged his readers to wake up to a spiritual reality: the return of Jesus and the fulfillment of our salvation.

- **(13:11-12)** Though Paul did not know when Christ would return, he knew the appointed time was drawing near. He urged the Roman believers to live with spiritual alertness, shaped by the nearness of that day. Though centuries have passed, each day brings us closer to His return, and our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

ASK: How aware are you of Christ's return, and how does that awareness—or lack of it—shape your daily choices? (p. 95)

HIGHLIGHT: Briefly discuss the list of sins believers are called to avoid in verse 13, along with the challenge to put on Christ in verse 14. Use the commentary for verses 13-14 on page 99 to supplement the discussion.

DISCUSS: What steps can we take to prevent spiritual lethargy? (p. 95)

APPLY: Lead the group to identify specific ways believers can honor Christ and record the information in the third column of **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*).

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers should honor civil authorities.
- Believers are to love our neighbors.
- Believers are to display Christlikeness so that their lives reflect Jesus.

REFLECT: Direct attention back to **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*). Encourage adults to consider how the three application points relate to the activities listed on the poster. Challenge adults to put their faith into action by selecting at least one idea from each column to implement this week.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to read and consider the **Apply the Text** activity on page 95. Lead a brief discussion on what it means to honor civil authorities as a believer today. Remind adults that they don't have to agree with every policy or position, but they do need to show respect for the individual that God has placed in authority.

PRAY: Remind adults about the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on p. 63) and encourage them to use it as a prayer prompt during the week. Close in prayer, asking God to help each adult represent Christ by honoring leaders, other people, and Jesus.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session, sending a text or email to the group. Encourage them to memorize Romans 13:14 and to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions on page 99. Urge them to consider ways they can show honor to someone else this week and to find someone who will hold them accountable for this kind of activity on a regular basis.