

Right or Wrong? Government's role in God's order

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People say, "We need to get government off our backs" so much, it seems they don't want smaller government, but no government. In contrast, Jesus talked about government's role in God's created order. How can I communicate that idea to fellow church members and neighbors?

While the tendency may be to argue they are wrong, an effective strategy may be to ask what the government is doing to them that causes such distress. These comments seem to have exploded recently. When we hear them, we might start a helpful dialogue by asking what government action they are talking about. My guess is they will not provide a lot of specifics.

One has to wonder if the recent anti-government grousing is just one more ramification of the "me" society. We seem to hate anything that prevents us from doing everything we want or sharing any of our money to provide for the least of God's children. The most absurd ramification of recent days is the movement in some groups to secede from the United States. Clearly, advocates have given little thought to the benefits they would lose if they got their wish. A discussion point might be to talk about Jesus' view of government and how collective action for the common good accomplishes his purposes.

If Jesus spoke of rendering to Caesar, a brutal despot, how much more should we honor a duly elected government? It may be that rendering to Caesar involves more than just paying taxes, although the obligation of those to whom much is given to give in return certainly applies. Rendering to Caesar also may involve giving your time and energy to try to get the

laws you like enacted and those you don't changed—and not throwing a tantrum when you don't succeed.

Citizenship involves thoughtful consideration of numerous issues, including considering compromise and not just adopting an anti-government rant forwarded from the Internet.

You also might remind the complainers that government gives us police officers who protect our homes and families, interstate highways that make travel easy, homeland security that allows air travel free from the constant threat of terror and schools where all children can get an education to enable them to accomplish the American dream.

If someone wanted to secede and start their own country, they would need to provide their own border security, raise their own army, find money for colleges without U.S. government grants or loans, buy their own national parks and find the money to maintain them. We possess the luxury of choosing a lovely greeting card, and for 45 cents, having it flown across the country and hand-delivered to the recipient.

Point out that in 1955, the highest tax rate on individual incomes was 91 percent. We are doing a lot more in 2013 while paying a lot less in taxes.

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Right or Wrong? is co-sponsored by the Texas Baptist theological education office and Christian Life Commission. Send your questions about how to apply your faith to bill.tillman@texasbaptists.org.