

Bible Studies for Life: July 19

By Clay Anthony

How should I respond to politics? • Romans 13:1-10



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Walk down memory lane to your elementary years when you were learning the parts of speech. Do you recall the definition of an adverb? An adverb is used to modify actions. If you're doing something, how are you doing it? Quickly? Gladly? Adverbs are used to describe how you are living life. Today's text is a hotbed for present discussion on how you and I are to be doing in a certain part of our lives. Indeed, how are believers to respond to politics? Just thinking of that question can be overwhelming but truth be known, the Bible is crystal clear as to how we are to respond to all parts of life. Even hot-button topics such as political discourse.

Respond obediently. Believers are called to obey. We are never given a pass to act against the authority that is over us, because that government authority was instituted by God. Leaders are meant to lead us for our good. We enjoy the benefits of living in a country led by a government set up to protect us and lead us toward peaceful lives. We certainly do not agree with everything our leaders do, nor do we agree with all points that our fellow citizens might hold. We are, however, expected to respond to our leaders with obedience. Remember that the Apostle Paul was writing to Christians in Rome who were being led by a pagan government. Paul felt it important for believers to be the best citizens of the nation even if the government was not always on their side. Obedience is a witness to unbelievers even if they are in leadership positions. Verse four reports twice that even national leaders

are servants of God. The word servant here is where we get our English word *deacon*. The elected officials over us have God over them. In obeying them, we are only obeying God's appointed servants.

Respond respectfully. Verse seven picks up the idea of respecting our leaders. We are to pay proper respect to proper people. Our elected officials, if appointed by God, are placed over us by God's own doing. Being respectful does not mean agreeing with every policy that is made. In fact, our nation was founded on the idea of standing up against a government with which we did not agree. However, that disagreement should always be handled as Christ honoring people. You have heard of the Boston Tea Party. Did you know that those who stormed the ships and dumped the tea into the Boston Harbor stayed afterwards and mopped the boats' decks and actually thanked the ships' captains for their hospitality?

Respond lovingly. Our first concern must be the building of the Kingdom of Christ over all other kingdoms we can fathom. To do that, we must practice love. In our talking, debating, listening, and voting, we are required to act in love. Again, there will always be disagreements. Just know that there are good people of all political stripes. Political discussions can ruin our witness for Jesus if we are not careful to speak in love. Verse nine lists four of the Ten Commandments. Each of these commands guide how we are to treat other people, yet all are tied up with the command to love others. Verse 10 is a foundational statement to our daily living: love does not wrong a neighbor. Your neighbor is that person who is least like you in every way possible (Luke 10:25-37).

Our response to politics says much of our relationship to Jesus. When we obey as we should (Acts 5:29) and show those not like us great love and respect, we are acting better than average citizens. We are behaving as if we belong to another country. In all things, let us represent our King.

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