

# Lesson 10

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## Our Community

Up to this point we have studied the biblical foundations of Christian stewardship and their application to what we are and have. I hope you have already begun to make these truths a part of your life! Now we come to the last lesson of this course in order to deal with our relationship to the community of which we form a part.

As God's stewards we have certain obligations to our community. In order to fulfill them we need to know what they are. It is in this way that this lesson will be very useful to you. By studying it well you will discover different ways you can exercise your stewardship in the community as a witness, citizen, or neighbor.

### lesson outline

Christian Testimony  
Civic Responsibility  
Social Involvement



## lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Name several ways a Christian can be a testimony in his or her community.
- List the responsibilities a Christian has toward his community as a citizen.
- Explain how a Christian can be involved in his society as a good neighbor.

## learning activities

1. This is the last lesson of the course! Study it carefully, following the method you have used in the previous lessons.
2. After you have completed the lesson and taken the self-test, review Unit 3 (Lessons 7-10). Then complete your unit student report answer sheet for Unit 3 and return it to your ICI instructor.

## key words

advertising  
candidate  
citizen  
elect

initiative  
media  
Red Cross  
vote

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## lesson development

### CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

#### Living a Godly Life

**Objective 1.** *Choose statements giving the relationship between the life of the Christian and a just society.*

In today's world there is a tremendous desire for justice. People want a just society, but what they don't want is to live a just life. They don't realize that a society is just only if the individuals that make it up are just. It is impossible to make a society of gold with men of clay.

Jesus said, "Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires" (Matthew 5:6). Of course, He was referring to those who have a strong desire to do what is right and just *themselves*, not to those who have a strong desire that *others* do what is just. In this respect only we, the Christians, can have this desire.

As Christians we are a great beneficial influence on the community. We are like salt for mankind (Matthew 5 :13). Actually, if the society in which we live isn't more evil it is because of us, the Christians. By living godly lives we can make our light shine in front of the people, so they will see the good things we do and praise the Lord (Matthew 5:16). How much better society would be if every Christian would live a godly life!

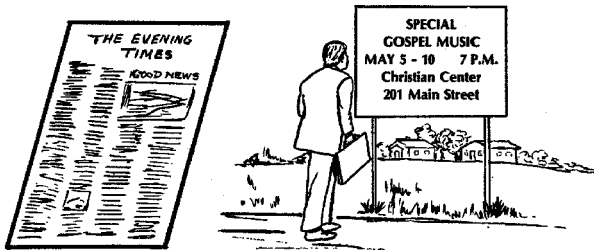
**1** Which statement gives the relationship between the Christian's life and a just society?

- a) In order to have a just society, Christians must be officials in the government.
- b) The most important way a Christian can make a just society is to desire that others do what is right.
- c) By living a godly life, it is possible for each Christian to help the entire society to be just.

## Advertising the Church

**Objective 2.** *List some ways you could advertise your church in your community.*

There may be a lot of people in your community who don't know that your church exists. Maybe you, the believer, have put the lamp under a bowl (Matthew 5:15). It is necessary to use the different methods of communication to advertise your church. Advertising through newspaper and radio may be very expensive. But there are certain kinds of news stories that the directors of these media value. Such are, for example, campaigns for evangelism and Sunday school, conventions, the opening of an outpost, a wedding, the visit of a distinguished speaker, or some other important event in the life of the church.



**2** In your notebook, list at least three ways you could advertise your church. These ways could include events that would make good news stories.

## CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

**Objective 3.** *Select statements giving the Christian's responsibilities as a citizen.*

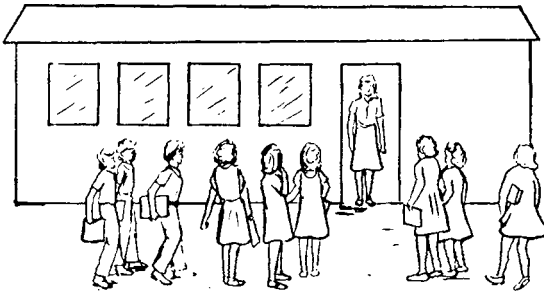
### Obeying Those in Authority

In Romans 13:1-6 the apostle Paul teaches us that the governmental authorities have been set up by God. The Christian, therefore, is a person who obeys the authorities and respects the laws. He doesn't oppose the authorities, because in doing this he is opposing what God has set up. He is not a revolutionary, however just the cause may seem to be. He

doesn't join with those who try to overthrow the authorities. Notice, for example, the great respect that David had for Saul because Saul was God's anointed. Although God had rejected Saul, David didn't try to dethrone him. Twice David could have killed him, but both times he spared his life (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9-11). God had set Saul up as the one in authority. So as long as God didn't remove him from the throne, David wasn't going to overturn what God had set up.

### **Paying Taxes**

Many of the public benefits we enjoy, such as public schools, street lighting, police protection, and roads are financed by the taxes we pay. Therefore, the one who evades paying taxes is hurting his community. And one assumes that a Christian will help his community, not harm it.



Jesus taught that taxes should be paid when He said, "pay to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor" (Matthew 22:21). And not only that, but also He gave us an example when paying taxes (Matthew 17:24-27). The apostle Paul also clearly taught that believers should pay their taxes (Romans 13:6-7).

### **Exercising the Right to Vote**

A government is responsible to God because He set it up, but it is also responsible to the people who elected it. Likewise the people are responsible to God for the election of their authorities. If a government is bad, it cheats the people who elected it. God can remove it, but the people are guilty of having elected a bad government. We must examine, therefore, our

motives when we vote. Do we vote for the candidate who pays more? For the one who has promised us some personal favors? Or for the one who seems best able to fulfill the office? If we give serious thought to these questions, we won't have so much to regret after having voted.

As believers we should pray for God's direction to vote wisely. It is possible for a voter to be deceived with false promises by those who are only seeking power. It has even happened that some have used poor people as a way to get into government. Once elected they forget the poor they persuaded and flattered. May no believer be deceived by those who hide miserly interests behind a false front of good will towards those who are disadvantaged. We shouldn't forget that Judas, the traitor and thief, made a great show of interest in the poor (John 12:4-6).

### **Participating in the Government**

Few governments are good because generally speaking those in authority aren't Christians. But believers can help make a government better if they work in positions of authority. It is true, however, that the temptations that exist are many and great. But the prophet Daniel is an excellent example for us. In fact, Daniel was a very godly man and a great statesman (Daniel 1:1–6:28). In the midst of a corrupt court he kept himself faithful to God. And God honored him.

In Romans 16:23 the apostle Paul mentions Erastus, a believer who was the "city treasurer." If Erastus could serve God in that position, so can you. Therefore, if God calls you to take a position of responsibility in the government of your country, accept it. This way you can use your influence as a Christian to do things that will lead to the welfare of your community.

### **Praying for Those in Authority**

Working together with a government to make it better is not the only thing we are able to do. The Scripture also teaches us that we need to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2). And we need to do this not only because God orders it, but also

for our own well-being, “that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence towards God and with proper conduct” (1 Timothy 2:2). The troubled times we live in certainly cause us to realize how necessary it is for us to do this!

**3** Who are the leaders for whom you should pray? In your notebook, make a list of them and pray regularly for them. Whether or not they are godly, you can pray to the Lord to give them the wisdom to be good leaders.

**4** Circle the letter of each TRUE statement.

- a** According to Romans 13:1-3, a Christian obligated to overthrow the government if it is evil.
- b** A believer’s responsibility to the government he lives under includes paying taxes.
- c** If a Christian prays for God’s will to be done in his government, it is not necessary for him to vote.

## **SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT**

**Objective 4.** *Identify examples of Christians who are fulfilling their responsibilities in society.*

### **Influencing Our Society**

The early disciples were considered to be people very dangerous to the established social order. They were even accused of having “caused trouble everywhere” (Acts 17:6). The social conditions of that time were far from being just. But the teachings of Jesus given by the apostle upset the injustice of their time.

Today we enjoy many social benefits which seem to us to be the most natural thing in the world. Some of them are even part of the program of social action of certain governments. But who took the initiative to promote the changes that brought about these benefits? Christian men and women, of course! Let us consider, for example, those who did away with slavery, made laws for the protection of children, gave women the freedom to vote, and established hospitals and the Red Cross.

However, we need to recognize that the social order we live in today isn't the best. There is still much to do. The believers in the early church had an effect on their society; we can have an effect on ours. We can raise our voices to fight on the side of justice and against the social evils of our time. "Righteousness makes a nation great; sin is a disgrace to any nation" (Proverbs 14:34).

**5** What does it mean for a person to have a good influence or effect on his society?

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### Loving Our Neighbor

Jesus taught that loving one's neighbor is as important as loving God (Matthew 22:37-39, Mark 12:30-31). Even more, both commandments are so closely related to each other that no one can say he loves God without loving his neighbor too. The parable of the good Samaritan illustrates this truth very beautifully (Luke 10:30-37). Let us take care, as believers, that we don't fall into the same error as the priest and Levite did. They seemed to be too occupied with their religion; as a result, they didn't have time to concern themselves with the needs of their neighbor.





As Christians we have the responsibility of doing good to everyone, and especially to those who belong to our family of faith (Galatians 6:10). This is to say, we ought to help those brothers who have a need (Acts 4 :34-35; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17). We should also help strangers in the same way (Matthew 25:34-40; James 1:27). There is a great opportunity for the believer who is ready to help his neighbor. He may teach nonreaders to read, help restore delinquents, law breakers, drunkards, and drug addicts, and establish homes for the needy.

**6** Circle the letter in front of each example of a Christian who is fulfilling his or her responsibilities in society.

- a) Bill finds ways of bringing about changes for the better in his society and doing good things for his neighbors.
- b) Madeline spends her time on her religion, leaving others to be concerned about unjust social conditions.
- c) Joe works to influence his society by fighting against the government that is in power.

You have come to the end of your study of this course on *The Responsible Christian: A Study in Christian Stewardship*. But in a way you have also come to the beginning of it—for now I hope you will actually apply to your life the things you have learned. It is true that the responsibilities of a Christian steward are great. But so are the rewards! As you seek to honor and serve God as His steward, you will experience the special joy that belongs to those who faithfully invest and manage everything He has entrusted to them. May He bless and inspire you as you live for Him!

**self-test**

**1** Which Bible verse or verses would be the best to share with someone to show him that Christians should be testimonies in their community?

- a) 1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9-11
- b) Matthew 5:13-16
- c) Matthew 22:21
- d) 1 Timothy 2:1 -2

**2** In your notebook, make a list of several ways that believers in your church could be testimonies in their community.

**3** Suppose a friend of yours tells you that Christians should avoid taking positions of responsibility in the government because most governments are corrupt. In your notebook, write out a reply to such a statement, using at least one Scripture reference in your answer.

**4** Suppose you wanted to explain to someone what the five main civic responsibilities of a Christian are. In your notebook, list each of those five. Beside each one, write any Scripture references that teach it or give an example of it.

**5** Suppose you wanted to explain to a friend how a Christian can be involved in society as a good neighbor. In your notebook, list the main things you would say and give the Bible verses that illustrate or support each one.

<p>Be sure to complete your unit student report for Unit Three and return the answer sheet to your ICI instructor.</p>
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**answers to study questions**

- 4** a False.  
b True.  
c False. A Christian should both pray for God's will to be done and vote.
- 1** c) By living a godly life, it is possible for each Christian to help the entire society to be just.
- 5** It means that he causes or brings about changes which result in good things or benefits for others.
- 2** Your answer. If your church is planning to have a special service to celebrate the birth or resurrection of Jesus, this might be the kind of event that could be advertised. You may think of other ways to make the presence of your church known in your community.
- 6** a) Bill.
- 3** Your answer.

**Your Notes**