

INTRODUCTION

In our country we have hundreds of courts where thousands of lawyers are asking questions of witnesses. Most of them are pretty sharp characters. But in every one of these courts, there is a court reporter taking down everything being said. Because of that we have a record of some pretty funny questions that have actually been asked by lawyers. Here are some of my favorites.

One lawyer asked a witness: "The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?" Another lawyer asked, "Was it you or your younger brother who was killed in the war?" A lawyer showed a witness a photograph and said, "This is a picture of you?" Answer: "Yes." Lawyer: "Were you present when your picture was taken?"

One lawyer asked, "Can you describe the individual?" The witness answered: "He was about medium height with a thick beard." The lawyer asked: "Was this a male or female?"

Sometimes the answer is funnier than the question. One lawyer told the witness: "All your answers must be verbal. Where did you go to school?" The witness answered: "Verbal."

My favorite exchange was between a lawyer and a Medical Examiner. The lawyer asked: "Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?" Answer: "No." Lawyer: "Did you check for blood pressure or breathing?" Answer: "No." Lawyer: "So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?" Answer: "No." Lawyer: "How can you be so sure, Doctor?" Answer: "Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar." Lawyer: "But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?" Answer: "It is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere."

Speaking of foolish questions, Jesus is the target of some interesting questions from the Jewish leaders. He is in Jerusalem for the final week before the cross. The religious leaders are looking for some way to make Him say something to allow them to arrest Him. So, there is an ongoing verbal boxing match going on and Jesus is winning every round with His knockout punches of wisdom. What these religious leaders don't know is Jesus is going to go willingly to the cross.

In today's round the Jewish leaders move in to try to throw another knockout punch at Jesus. You'll notice they first try to fake Him out with flattery before they try to knock Him down.

Mark 12:13-17. "Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, 'Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?'"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.

What's wrong with this picture? The Pharisees and Herodians were joining forces against Jesus. These two groups were on the opposite extremes of Jewish culture. The Herodians were a secular group who supported the Romans, and the Pharisees were a spiritual group who hated the Romans. It would be like A White Supremacist group cooperating with the NAACP. But the Pharisees and the Herodians shared one desire: They both wanted to get rid of Jesus. They demonstrated the old saying, "My enemy's enemy is my friend."

They thought they had cleverly laid a trap for Jesus. If He said, "Don't pay taxes," He could have been arrested by the Romans. If said, "Pay taxes," then all the common Jewish people would have considered Him a traitor. But Jesus outsmarted them. He said, "Show me the money!" Instead of being trapped, He shares an amazing life-principle. The best translation is, "Give back to Caesar what is his; and Give back to God what is His." There is a double-truth in this principle that is still in effect. What is God trying to teach us from this passage?

I. THE GOVERNMENT HAS A LEGAL CLAIM ON YOUR LOYALTY

Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's." Why didn't Jesus pull out a coin from his pocket? He didn't have one. We sometimes forget that He lived a life of worldly poverty. He said, "Foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man doesn't have a place to lay His head."

The coin someone produced was a Roman denarius. If it dated to the time of Jesus, it would have had the image of Tiberius Caesar on one side and on the other side it said he was the son of the Divine Augustus, the most high. It literally said Tiberius was the son of god because the Romans claimed Augustus was a god. How ironic that the true Son of God would be holding a coin with that inscription.

If you asked me, "Should we pay taxes to Washington?" I could say that same thing, "Show me a dollar bill. Whose image is on the one dollar bill?" George Washington. So we should give to Washington that which is Washington's. By the way, have you noticed the design of the other currency bills has changed? The new \$100 bill took some getting used to, and I recall during the transition from the old design, when we visited China, they would only accept the old bills. But poor George has stayed the same since his last facelift in 1963 when the words, "In God we Trust" were added. In fact, each year the Congress has passed a law saying the design of the \$1 bill can't be altered. So until the law changes you're going to be looking at George's face on the \$1 Bill. What's the point? The Bible affirms that we obey and support our government.

The Apostle Paul made this clear in Romans 13. And before you read this passage, remember that the vicious, wicked, Christian-killing Nero was the Emperor when Paul penned these words. The Bible says, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established... This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing." (Romans 13:1, 6)

Our responsibility to our government can be summarized in three words. Pray, Pay, and Obey. We are commanded to pray for those who are in authority over us. Second we should pay the taxes we owe. And third we must obey the laws of our government.

Obedience to the law is part of our Christian testimony. I have a pastor friend in Alabama named Bill who was driving to speak at a church in another county and he was running late. He was driving about 20 miles over the speed limit, when suddenly he remembered he had a Christian bumper sticker on his car. Suddenly, Bill's conscience started giving him fits, saying, "What do these people think about you when you whip past them doing 20 miles over the speed limit?" So he faced this moral dilemma, and knew what he had to do. He pulled off the road, ripped off bumper sticker, jumped back in and kept speeding. By the way, you may have noticed I don't have a Christian bumper sticker on my car!

But some Christians have asked the question, "Do we ALWAYS have to be loyal to our government?"

Personal Application: I must honor and obey human authority unless it contradicts God's Word

There are only two occasions when you may choose not to obey our government. If the government commands you to do something God's Word prohibits, then you should obey God. Or if the government forbids you to do something God's Word commands, then you should obey God. This is often called civil disobedience. There are always negative consequences to civil disobedience.

In Acts 5, Peter and John were arrested for preaching that the Jewish leaders had killed the Messiah. The Bible says, "Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.' Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'" (Acts 5:27-29)

They kept on preaching. They were guilty of civil disobedience. And they had to face the consequences. They were arrested again and beaten. But the Bible says they walked away from the punishment with bleeding backs, "Rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." (Acts 5:41)

There was a time when Christianity was part of the accepted mainstream culture of our nation. But our nation has allowed an ill wind to fill our sails and we have sailed into the uncharted waters of moral relativity and wickedness. As our nation sails further away from God and His Word, we may all be forced with the choice to obey God rather than our government, but we must be willing to pay the price of civil disobedience. Let me introduce you to Baronelle Stuzman. She's 70 years old, a grandmother, and she has been operating Arlene's Florist Shop in Richland, Washington for the past 40 years. She has been cheerfully serving all of her customers, even those who practice a gay lifestyle. One of her frequent customers and a friend was Robert Ingersoll. In 2013 he asked Baronelle to design the floral arrangements for the gay marriage to his partner. Baronelle said, "I'm sorry Rob, I can't do your wedding because of my relationship with Jesus." Rob seemed to be okay with that and they even talked about his mother walking him down the aisle and then they hugged and Rob left. But when his partner and the ACLU heard

about it, they sprang into action to take Baronelle to court and have the state charge her with discrimination.

The judge ruled in favor of the gay couple. Baronelle was ordered to pay a fine and all the attorney costs. They found that not only was her business liable, but she was personally liable and the estimated cost will run in the seven figures. Stuzman will lose her business and all her savings. Her attorney supplied pro bono by Alliance Defending Freedom was Kristen Waggoner. She said, "The message of these rulings is unmistakable: The government will bring about your personal and professional ruin if you don't help celebrate same-sex marriage."

So, we should be loyal to our government unless our government requires us to disobey God's Word. There is a higher law than man's law. But Jesus was saying much more than how we should support our government. The second part of this truth is that:

II. GOD HAS A LOVING CLAIM ON YOUR LIFE

Jesus said, "Give to God what is God's." If you don't obey the government, you can be arrested and punished. So you really don't have a choice in the matter. But when it comes to God's demand on our lives, He calls us on the basis His love, not any kind of legal requirement. He wants us to choose to love Him as response to His love.

Personal Application: I must always honor and obey my heavenly Creator whose image I bear

Jesus asked the question about whose image was on the Roman coin. The unasked question that completes His thought is, "Who's image is stamped upon your life?"

We are all created in God's image. The Latin phrase for that is *imago dei*. In the first chapter of the Bible we read, "So God created man in His own image...male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

When God created us in His image it doesn't mean we look like God, it means that as God is a tri-unity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are created as tri-unity: Body, soul, and spirit. You and I are made in God's image, and we are to give Him something greater than our money—we give Him ourselves. None of us may look very "godly" but we are made in His image!

The brilliant British evangelical scholar, Dr. John Stott, wrote: "We bear the royal stamp of God upon us, we are His kingdom's royal coin. Jesus looks to us and asks, 'Who's image is this? Who made this life? Who owns it? Who gives value to it?' Our Creator, of course. And Jesus challenges us, 'This life is not yours. It was provided for you to use. But, it really belongs to someone else. So, give it back!'"

Let me give you two implications of what this means.

A. I am a citizen of two countries

The Bible says, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:20) I am a citizen of the United States because I was born on January 16, 1953 in Ruston, Louisiana (if you're trying to do the math, I'm 62.) Today is the oldest I've ever been, but it's also the youngest I'll ever be. I am a citizen of a heaven because I was born again on March 11, 1962 in Florala, Alabama. And I'm like all the other people of faith about whom it says in Hebrews 11:16, I am looking for a better country, a heavenly one. When I die, or Jesus returns I will no longer be a citizen of the U.S. But there will never be a moment again in eternity when I will ever lose my heavenly citizenship! Hallelujah!

I can prove my U.S. citizenship by showing you my U.S. passport. It has my picture in it. It's not a very good picture. I can show you I'm a citizen of heaven, because the character and nature of my Creator is stamped in me. It's not always a good picture of Jesus, because I have plenty of flaws and shortcomings. But every day, my Creator is working on me to make me conform more and more to the image of Jesus. It's a lifelong process.

But we are MORE than just mere citizens of heaven. We have a job.

B. My job is to be an ambassador for Christ

The Bible says, "And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:19-20)

A good ambassador doesn't hide out at the embassy and study the U.S. Constitution; he goes out into his assigned country and meets with its citizens. He delivers the message from his boss.

As ambassadors for Christ, our job is to share the message of reconciliation. Sin has separated each person on this planet from his or her Creator. God sends us to tell people about the need to be reconciled with Him. I like that the Bible uses a strong word. We **IMPLORE** you: Be reconciled to God. Salvation is far too important to simply ask, request, or suggest that people be reconciled to God. We must **IMPLORE** them to come to Christ!

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. He has already done everything necessary for reconciliation. If there are 1,000 steps that a person has to take to be reconciled to God, then God has already taken 999 of those steps. He sent His only Son in the world to die on the Cross taking our sin upon Himself. All we need to do is to accept this offer of forgiveness. That's the message our King has commanded us to share.

CONCLUSION

We live in a world where two kingdoms collide: God and government. Go back in time to when Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate just hours before He would be crucified. Pilate asked Jesus a lot of questions, but Jesus was basically quiet. He was fulfilling the scripture that had predicted that as a lamb is silent before its shearers, so he opened not His mouth. Finally in exasperation, Pilate says, "Hey! You'd better answer me. Don't you know I have power to kill you or to save you?" I love the answer Jesus gave. I believe He looked at Pilate with eyes like a

blazing fire and a voice cool enough to freeze hell. He said, "You have no power except the power given to you from above." That's where all government receives its power—from God.

We live in this world, but we are not OF this world. We never should feel at home here, because this world isn't our home, we're just passing through. Ambassadors always long for their home country. My favorite quote by C.S. Lewis is when he wrote: "If I discover within myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

Being an ambassador to a foreign country can be a dangerous job as Chris Stevens learned in Libya three years ago. On Sunday, January 8, 1956 there were five brave ambassadors for Christ wading through a shallow stream in the jungles of Ecuador. They had come for one reason—to implore that the local natives be reconciled with God. For several days they had been dropping gifts of food to the natives from a small plane. Around noon on this day, they had radioed that a group of natives were approaching and they were excited about making contact. Later, when they didn't return, all five bodies were found in the stream, dead from the spears of the natives they came to show the love of Jesus. The watch of the pilot, Nate Saint had stopped at 3:17 p.m. Elizabeth later returned to the area to settle among the people who had killed her husband. For years she showed them the love of Jesus and many came to Christ.

Nate Saint's son, Steve, was five when his dad was killed. Years later, he returned to visit members of the tribe, most of whom had become Christians. Forty years after his dad was killed, Steve was talking with one of the oldest natives who had been part of the group that killed his father. An often-overlooked detail of the attack is that all five men had loaded pistols to protect themselves from wild animals. None of the pistols were fired. Decades later, this old warrior was haunted about this detail. He asked Steve Saint, "Why didn't your father use his gun to protect himself?" Steve thought for a moment before he answered the question. He said, "He was acting like his King, Jesus, who gave His life for His friends. That day, my dad knew that if he died, he would go to heaven. But he also knew that if any of you died, you wouldn't go to heaven. That's why he didn't fire his gun."

The world looks at someone like Jim Elliot or Nate Saint and says, "What fools!" No, that's how ambassadors act. They are like their King. And as you all know, Jim Elliot had written in his journal when he was student at Wheaton, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's but be sure to give to God what is God's. Be a good citizen of your country. But more than that: Be an ambassador for Christ!

OUTLINE

I. THE GOVERNMENT HAS A LEGAL CLAIM ON YOUR LOYALTY

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established... This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing." *Romans 13:1, 6*

Personal Application: I must honor and obey human authority unless it contradicts God's Word

"Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.' Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'" *Acts 5:27-29*

II. GOD HAS A LOVING CLAIM ON YOUR LIFE

Personal Application: I must always honor and obey my heavenly Creator whose image I bear

"So God created man in His own image... male and female he created them." *Genesis 1:27*

A. I am a citizen of two countries

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." *Philippians 3:20*

B. My job is to be an ambassador for Christ

"And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." *2 Corinthians 5:19-20*

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*