

LESSON 4 Standing in Community

“Thank you, and here is your change.”

“But sir, you have given me too much change. Here, this is yours.”

“You are right. You are an honest man! There are not many people who would do that.”

“The Bible teaches that we must always be honest.”

You probably have had an experience similar to this. Have you shown a high Christian principle when you could have done otherwise? Taking a stand for integrity and righteousness is an example of showing a true spirit of community.

The Plan

- A. Standing and the Word of God
- B. Standing and Tradition
- C. Standing and Regulations

The Goals

1. Explain the importance of taking a stand for righteousness.
2. Show how you can use tradition in your community to honor the Lord.
3. Identify ways to show Christian attitudes toward community functions.

A. STANDING AND THE WORD OF GOD

Goal 1. Explain the importance of taking a stand for righteousness.

The apostle Paul urges, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:11). What does it mean to take a stand? Does it mean just being against something, or does it also mean being for something? In most cases the Bible encourages us to take a stand against certain things. Certainly, when we are Christians we will be in favor of godly things. To stand means to obey God’s will, as you have learned from the Scriptures.

In the Scripture quoted above, we are told to put on God’s armor. Armor in the military sense is metal clothing worn for protection. Notice that we are told why we should put on God’s armor: to stand against the devil’s schemes.

God’s armor is given for our protection. Paul mentions every piece of armor to illustrate how completely prepared we are to fight the enemy. This infers that we will not deny what we believe.

Standing fast is being firm. It is deciding that a bad act or teaching will not influence your life. It is putting into practice good acts or teachings that will strengthen your Christian life.

We could illustrate this kind of action by a good Christian habit—going to church. You know that when it is time to go to church to worship the Lord, you will do so. You do not have to decide this over and over. It is already the pattern for your life. However, some situations call for standing against something. Paul advises, “After you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then” (Ephesians 6:13–14).

Daniel 3 tells of the king who built a statue and said that all the people in Babylon should bow down and worship it. Three young men refused. Even after they were told that the penalty for disobedience would be confinement in a furnace or oven, they would not change their action. The king became irate and had the fire in the furnace intensified. The young men had taken a stand and refused to change, so they were thrown into the furnace. It seemed like certain death.

However, God did not let them die. Greatly amazed, the king released the young men and declared, “No other god can save in this way” (Daniel 3:29). These young men had taken a stand not to bow and worship a false god. Because of the young men’s determination and faith, the king and his people saw the great power of God. Do you have that kind of determination to serve God?

Your faith must be from the heart. When your friends see your spirit of community and your firm stand for what is right, they will respect you, and they will be aware of God’s power in your life. When some practice would cause you to deny a part of your Christianity, stand firm for what is right!

Application

- 1** To take a stand means to be against anything that
 - a)** does not start in the church.
 - b)** opposes what the Bible teaches.

- 2** Taking a stand requires us
 - a)** always to be against something.
 - b)** often to be in favor of something.
 - 3** The story of the three young men in Daniel 3 teaches that we should
 - a)** obey God more than people.
 - b)** obey our rulers no matter what they demand.
 - 4** We are taking a firm stand when we
 - a)** obey God’s Word even when it is not easy to do so.
 - b)** do that which will cause the least difficulty.
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B. STANDING AND TRADITION

Goal 2. Show how you can use tradition in your community to honor the Lord.

A tradition is a belief or custom handed down from one generation to another. Although it is not always written down, it is very important to the members of the community. Many traditions are good and useful as they help people to remember their past. Other traditions are wrong for Christians. There may be times when traditions would lead us to do something that the Bible teaches against. At such times, we must defend what is right.

For example, in some parts of the world dead relatives are highly respected. This is not in itself a bad thing. We should remember with respect our relatives who have died. But we should not respect them to the point of worshipping them. When we worship our ancestors, we disobey God’s Word. In Exodus 20:3, God instructed, “You shall have no other gods before me.” Those who have died have lived their lives and gone. We must leave them with God. Now we should live in such a way that we are sure of our own spiritual condition when we face death.

Application

5 Traditions are

- a) customs handed down from one generation to the next.
- b) written family laws that must be obeyed.

6 Christians should

- a) try to find ways of using good traditions for a Christian witness.
- b) have nothing to do with traditions in their community.

7 Answer the following questions.

- a) What is one tradition practiced in your community?

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- b) Is there a way that you can observe it without destroying your Christian testimony? Explain.

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- c) Are there traditional practices in your community that are not suitable for Christians? What should you do about them?

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C. STANDING AND REGULATIONS

Goal 3. Identify ways to show Christian attitudes toward community functions.

Governments, rulers, and authorities are given to us by God. In 1 Timothy 2:1–2 we are instructed to pray for those who are in authority over us. As we pray for them, God will help them to be a blessing.

The Bible also teaches us to honor and obey the laws our rulers make. Titus 3:1 records, “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.” A Christian will obey government

regulations even if he or she personally disagrees with them, unless they are contrary to Christian teaching and God's Word.

Governments must decide which days are official holidays. Many holidays are connected with the religions of a country. Sometimes celebrations will be for days that are not special for Christians. Do not allow this to bother you. You can honor God every day of the year. When these holidays come along, take the opportunity to rest and thank the Lord for shedding His light into your heart.

In some areas, holidays provide special opportunities for the Christian. People are in the streets and they will read gospel literature. If you are allowed to do so in your area, use these holidays to distribute literature and witness to people who need Christ. It may even be possible to preach the Word in public places, if you are permitted to do so. Turn non-Christian days into workdays for the Lord!

Sometimes we may need to adjust our plans or schedules to meet government requirements. For example, in one country the government is making a practice of having political functions on Sunday mornings. Attendance is mandatory, so the churches must cooperate. What can the churches do in this case? God is not limited to being worshipped on Sundays. Most of the churches have a Saturday evening service. In this way Christians can obey the law and still have a special time to worship the Lord.

Application

- 8** Laws should be obeyed
 - a)** under all circumstances.
 - b)** unless they oppose God's Word.
- 9** Legal holidays should be
 - a)** observed only when there is a religious reason for them.
 - b)** looked upon as an opportunity to witness.

10 When government functions affect church functions, the Christian should

- a)** cooperate with the government as much as possible.
 - b)** pay no attention to the demands of the government.
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If we want our Christian testimony to be effective, we must stand firmly for what is right. As much as possible, we should be loyal citizens and show respect for our government and our leaders. When regulations go against our Christian principles, we must ask God for wisdom to know what to do and be willing to take our stand for God.

Check Your Answers

- 6 a)** try to find ways of using good traditions for a Christian witness.
- 1 b)** is against what the Bible teaches.
- 7** Your answer
- 2 b)** often to be in favor of something.
- 8 b)** unless they oppose God's Word.
- 3 a)** obey God more than people.
- 9 b)** looked upon as an opportunity to witness.
- 4 a)** obey God's Word even when it is not easy to do so.
- 10 a)** cooperate with the government as much as possible.
- 5 a)** beliefs or customs handed down from one generation to the next.