

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO WAR

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At the time of this writing, it has been three months since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon. The President of the United States has declared September 11 “Patriots Day” and on this day there will always be a presidential address and flags will be flown at half mast. There has been an unprecedented outpouring of giving, of relief work, of open dependence on God Almighty, of prayer and sacrifice on behalf of the direct victims of the attacks. On other fronts, businesses across the nation were adversely affected, persons lost their jobs and incomes as layoffs and business failures occurred. And the nation went to war. The President has declared war on terrorism, and many people want revenge. What is the Christian response to all of this? Turn the other cheek? Hate them with a perfect hatred? What is the Christian response to war? I believe some understanding to this question can come from examining the three institutions God ordained: The Home, The Church, and The State, and the God-given authority of each of these institutions.

The scripture says in *2 Timothy 3:16* *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* Also, read in *2 Timothy 2:15* *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* From this, and other scriptures, we can reasonably conclude that the scripture can be used to explain our reasons for Christian conduct, and it has to be properly interpreted. With that in mind, let us examine the three institutions and draw conclusions based on the Word of God.

The three institutions ordained of God have as their head Jesus Christ. Further, there is an earthly order to these institutions, with appropriate courses of behavior and authority within these three institutions.

Institution →	Home	Church	State
Head:	Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ
Earthly Order of Authority:	Husband Wife Children	5-Fold Ministry Elders Congregation	Government Military Authority Local Civil Authority
<i>Purpose of Authority</i>	<i>Reflection of Heaven</i>	<i>Christian Maturity</i>	<i>Stability thru Law</i>
<i>Chief Area of Correction</i>	<i>Rebellion</i>	<i>Rebellion</i>	<i>Rebellion</i>
<i>Upper Limit of Discipline Authority</i>	<i>Spanking of Children</i>	<i>Excommunication of Church Members</i>	<i>Execution of Adult Law Breakers</i>

The Home

The first institution God created was the home, and the first family in that home was Adam, Eve, and their children. In Genesis chapters 1 and 2 we see in 1:26-28 that God created Adam and Eve, and gave both of them dominion over all the animal kingdom, and further charged them to be fruitful and multiply. Later in chapter 2 the account is given that Adam, created first, needed a “help meet” or a helper fit for him. This is found in 2:18-24.

Gen 1:26-28 *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God*

blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Gen 2:18-24 *And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. 19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

Paul's teaching in the New Testament (which is where express, clear doctrine is taken) describes the chain of authority and responsibility of the husband, wife, and children. Here in Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 we have the plain teaching of the husband being the head of the wife, and the children obeying their parents.

Ephesians 5:20-6:4 *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

Isolated verses in Proverbs describe corporal punishment of the children, including spanking with the rod. Yet in the New Testament we see that the parents are not to provoke the children, lest they be discouraged. Spanking is an authority given to the parents, it is a form of discipline and judgment, and it has its limitations and purpose.

- **Prov 13:24** *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*
- **Prov 22:15** *Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*

- **Prov 23:13-14** *Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*
- **Prov 29:15** *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*

Thus Christ is the head of the family, followed by the husband, then the wife, then and the children. The parents have the authority to spank and to discipline the children, to drive out rebellion. This is the limit of punishment that the parents can apply, and they can only do this within their own family and to their own children. The goal is to have a “reflection of Heaven” in the home, with the husband-wife relationship reflecting Christ and His Bride, the Church, and for the children to be raised properly, to have a right concept of God their Father (as they observe their own earthly father) and to be able to one day marry and have their home too have Christ’s as its Head. This is God’s way.

The Church

The Institution of the Church was God's idea. The apostle exhorted pastors to care for the church members in **Acts 20:28** *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. The Pastor has the obligation to care for the flock. The pastor is one of the 5-fold ministries referenced in Ephesians 4:11-12, And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

Regarding the local church being a part of the body of Christ, who is the authority and purpose of the church, we read in **1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 25-27** *The [human] body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ...25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

A full reading of 1 Corinthians chapter 12 describes the use of the Gifts of the Spirit as well as a beautiful analogy of the human body with the body of Christ, and how some perceived lesser members have all the more honor. In short, there is diversity within the church as there is diversity within the human body (eyes have a functions, feet have a function, hands, etc, even some “uncomely” parts have a function) but it is still one body, so too the body of Christ, the Church.

Under the desired circumstances, the local church would have a pastor and teachers, and be exposed to the ministry and vision and even oversight of evangelists, prophets, and apostles. Evangelists are commonly recognized within Christendom, and in some circles (particularly full-gospel organizations) the present ministry of prophets and apostles (even by title) are recognized, other organizations have other titles but whose offices are consistent with prophets and apostles (e.g. executive presbyters, missionaries, district overseers, etc.).

It is these 5-fold leaders, and their designated leaders (deacons, elders, etc.) who have an authority in the church to not only carry out teaching, but also correction, and ultimately discipline, discipline that can go all the way toward removing a person from the church.

1 Cor 5:11-13 But now I have written unto you [the Church at Corinth – 1 Cor. 1:2] not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Matt 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Removing a member from the church is not desirable, it is not something any pastor would look forward to, but it is something that if and when it needs to be done, it should be done properly and scripturally. Rebellion within the church pollutes the church. In the above chapter already reference, 1 Corinthians 5, Paul said in verse 6, ...a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” To maintain godliness and order within the church, the ungodly who will not repent are punished at the hands of the church authorities, and that their removal from the church.

We know that Jesus Christ is the head of the body, that is, the church. Christ is the foundation, cornerstone and head of His church. He is head of the local church, and He is head of the church in its all-inclusive broader sense, including all born again believers in heaven and earth! The church is an organism, with Christ as the living head. It is alive with the life of Christ made living in *each* member. The scriptures say in **Colossians 1:18** *And He [Jesus Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.* Christ is the head, and he has given authority to the local leadership to care for the church for whom He died.

Thus we have Christ as the Head of the Church, and the 5-fold ministry in authority, with the elders and deacons also in authority, but submitted to the 5-fold ministry of Ephesians 11 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers). This leadership team is to equip the congregation to do the work of the ministry, to bring them to Christian Maturity, that they may be taught the ways of the Lord and have victory over sin and the devil. The leadership has the God-given authority to discipline church members, even to expel them from the assembly, in order that the people in the Church be allowed to grow in Christ and in righteousness, and not have sin in the camp. Paul writes in *Ephesians 5:7 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

The State

The third institution ordained by God is the State. The prophet wrote in *Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* God founded the Hebrew nation, which would become Israel. It was founded upon a promise to Abraham all the way back to the book of Genesis. Abram comes on the scene in the end of Genesis chapter 11, but the promise that he would found a great nation was given in Chapter 12.

Gen 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I

will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

In the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, we read of, among other things, God's laws regarding how the society of a whole was to act. Remember, that the Old Testament is the story of a nation, the Jewish nation, and the New Testament is the story of a person, Jesus Christ. Again, the nation was founded and nurtured to bring the man Jesus Christ into the world. So there is much to read in these first five books about how the nation was to act, and the civil laws it was to keep. For instance, there was laws regarding property, laws regarding sanitation, laws regarding marriage, laws regarding civil authority. The Ten Commandments were given. Laws regarding treatment of servants, laws regarding acts of violence were given, laws concerning the responsibility of owners, of restitution, of human relations, and of worship. All of these were given on a "national" level, but they concerned the individual.

Remember always that God is interested in the individual. God's laws regarding society have at their foundation the *individual's* good. The individual good is the foundation from which all other laws emanated. Today it's reversed: the good of society is held up as the foundation and if that encroaches on your individual rights, well, too bad! The argument for public anything (schools, daycare centers, parks, television, support for the arts) is centered around "the good of society." Yet when God gave laws he gave them for the good of the individual, and what was good for the individual was then good for society (and not vice versa).

The Bible has a lot to say about property rights and privileges and responsibilities. A lot! Old and New Testaments reflect this. Laws today can encroach on the rights of property owners under the banner of "the good of society." The ignorant and ungodly see people as a mass, whereas God sees them as individuals. There's a reason why the Ten Commandments include such Commandments as #6 You shall not murder, #7 You shall not commit adultery, #8 You shall not steal. #9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. #10 You shall not covet. Notice that all of these, though given to the nation, deal with the individual (these are listed in Romans 13:9).

In the New Testament there is a section of the scriptures that specifically deals with civil authority, and that is found in *Rom 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*

There is a lot in a few verses here, but, again, the idea is that the individual is protected by law from the lawless. All persons are to be subject to the higher powers (military, police, etc.). The source of authority for the civil authorities is God Himself. Thus this law, in my view, allows on nation to go to war against another nation in the event that the belligerent nation comes against a people, and commits acts that are contrary to God's laws, e.g. the taking or destruction of life or property. The civil authorities must not "lord it over the people" but rather they carry out their obligation to keep the peace and to allow persons to serve God and enjoy the abundant life God has given them. Yet if the aggressor comes, then they have the authority to "bear the sword," but this is for the authorities and not for the everyday common man.

God allows civil authority because the individual, under law, is to be protected. Even civil authorities have laws that they are subject to. Almost 3,000 persons died in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The wife of one of the victims recently committed suicide because of intense despondency. The individuals of our society have a God-ordained right to protection from rebellious lawbreakers. Even murderers within our own borders (Theodore Kazinski, Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, Green River Killer, etc.) if brought to justice can be executed by the State and it is not a violation of scripture. It is likewise not an occasion to cheer, because a life has been extinguished. But that action allows closure, healing, and peace of mind to the surviving victims. The lawless are executed or imprisoned for the good of the *surviving individuals*, and less so for the “good of society.” And, in my opinion, the debt these criminals pay should be to “society,” but to the survivors of the crime.

We rightly pay taxes for these services, as God has ordained it. When a nation goes to war to uphold law, to protect its citizenry, to protect the individual, and according to its own law, then, though it is sobering, it is not unjust. War is not desired by any sane person, but there are enough Old Testament examples of nations at war and the history as to how they came about (typically one nation wanting to take something that belonged to another nation) to see that God allowed his people to go to war to protect themselves and their possessions. The purpose of the governmental, military, and civil authorities is to ensure the *individual* can live a peaceable life, a stable life based on understood law, to the glory of God the Father, and to the advancement of the kingdom of God.

So what about the terrorists of September 11? Do we want revenge? No. The Bible says that revenge belongs to God. *Rom 12:19 ...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.* But what can we do? The answer lies within the context of your God-given authority.

- As an *individual*, we are to turn the other cheek (the rule is *Rom 12:18, If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* The balance is that there is provision to protect yourself and your property in the scriptures. Jesus also said in *Matt 5:9, blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*)
- As a *parent*, we are to administer corporal punishment when appropriate.
- As a church *minister*, we are to discipline and excommunicate if needed.
- As a *civil authority* (e.g. *police*), we can apprehend, imprison, and even execute certain categories of lawbreakers.
- As a *nation*, with our military we are to uphold the law and defend life and property and “bear the sword” if the occasion thus requires, even against persons outside of our borders.

If I’m on the street as a private citizen, I do not have the authority to discipline that I would if I were a policeman. As a policeman, I wouldn’t have the authority to go outside of my jurisdiction, and especially outside of the country, to enforce the law that I would if I were under military authority.

Christians are to “*rightly divide the word of truth.*” That is, we are to know how to interpret and understand the scriptures. Understanding the authority given within the Home, the Church, and State helps us to understand the scriptures, and to allow us to have a proper, balanced, rational Christian Response to War.