

Matthew 22:15-22

The Challenge of Discipleship Study 5: *Citizenship*

Focus Question: *What does it mean for you to be a Christian citizen?*

Word of Life

““Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Matthew 22:21

Read [Matthew 22:15-22](#)

It isn't just Jesus who had disciples. In this passage, we read about the *disciples* of the Pharisees who were committed to studying the "correct" interpretation of the Torah and the Jewish way of life. It is these disciples who are used by the Pharisees to entrap Jesus.

Compare and contrast the disciples of the Pharisees and Jesus.

At first the interrogators appear sincere, flattering Jesus. Then, they question him about the law and the payment of taxes to Rome, the non-Jewish occupier of their land. Answering "yes" or "no" is bound to get Jesus into trouble with someone. Jesus is aware of the malice in their hearts.

Why are the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus?

When Jesus looks at the head depicted on the coin, he acknowledges the government of the day. His advice: give the Emperor his coin. Jesus knows God's rule and throne far exceed any human ruler. Jesus sees the bigger picture, but at the same time, he recognizes the here and now. It is a practical answer. For Jesus to suggest the people not pay taxes would certainly have provoked a riot and rebellion as people tried to usurp the Roman regime.

Although the faces on our coins today are different, the question asked of Jesus still rings true. Do we, as disciples of Jesus, need to pay taxes? If so, are all taxes justified? Why not withhold taxes and give the same amount to the church? Is it OK to fudge on tax returns and give the government less than the law requires?

1. *Take a moment to reflect on the questions in the above paragraph.*
2. *What other questions would you raise?*

The dilemma of the modern-day disciples is to not get caught in the consumer cycle, forgetting Jesus in the process. It's all God's. Always has been. Always will be. We seek to be good stewards of our financial resources, generously giving for the work of God's reign. At the same time, we support our government as it works for peace and justice for all, but raise questions when it does not.

3. *Make a list of the top ten things God has given to you.*
4. *How do you respond to God's gifts given to you?*
5. *Why is it so difficult to give to God what is God's?*
6. *What is the greatest challenge in being a Christian citizen?*

Prayer

Giving God, create in us generous hearts, ones overflowing with gratitude to you. Amen

Dig Deeper

[Psalm 24](#)

Last Word

This week, begin each day listing ten things in your life for which you can give thanks to God.