



# What Do We Believe?

## Lesson 47

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## Lesson 47: Religious Freedom

### Scriptures:

Genesis 1:27; Matthew 22:15-22; Acts 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1, 13, 14; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Titus 3:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:13-17

### Lesson Goals:

To show the learner the importance of separation of church and state  
To show the learner the difference in responsibilities of government and church  
To show the learner the responsibilities of individual persons in religious freedom

### Scripture Memory:

**Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. 1 Peter 2:17**

### The Lesson:

One of the best things that the founders of the United States of America did was to guarantee religious freedom to all people. There are many places in the world where the national government decides what religious beliefs persons may speak about in public. If you don't share those beliefs, you are not allowed to have a religious gathering where your beliefs are spoken. You are not allowed to have religious books, such as the Bible, in public. There are places where you may be imprisoned for practicing your religion, even in private places, if it is not the national religion.

Jesus taught that there is a place for governments and there is also a place for the practice of your religion. The government has the responsibility to protect persons in the worship of their God. Actually, that applies to all legitimate religions, not just Christianity. The government creates an environment that is free, safe, and that encourages a good life for its citizens. That should include full freedom to worship one's God. Jesus was very clear, as was Paul the apostle, that Christians should respect the government and be obedient to all laws that do not conflict with the will of God.

The government should make no laws that determine religious activities, and the church should not expect the government to assist it in carrying out its work. The government is not responsible for making laws that encourage the practice of any set of religious beliefs. God alone guides us in what we believe. The church is the mission of God on earth. It is not the responsibility of government to assist the church in carrying out that mission in any way...certainly not financially. Taxes paid to the government should be used to carry out the work of the government, and tithes given to God through the church should finance the mission of the church.

The practice of religion depends on the government. If the government doesn't grant religious freedom, individuals are hindered in worship and in encouraging others to join them in their faith. The government provides practical things like roads, postal service, security and protection, as well as freedom to be what you believe your God wants you to be.

Individual Christians are national citizens. They have the responsibility to vote and use their influence to guide the work of the government. Many people blame the government for things which seem to be less than Christian, or even to hinder the practice of religion. Every citizen has influence. People who practice religion are in great majority in the United States and in many other countries. The decision makers, legislators and national government leaders are elected by popular vote, and are influenced by people. If individuals who complain about what the government does, involved themselves and encouraged other Christians to be involved in government as Jesus instructed, the government has and would behave differently. With that in mind, Christians have only themselves to blame for the way government carries out its task.

The freedom of religion has been made possible at a great price. Strong willed Christians greatly influenced John Madison to propose the first amendment to the U. S. Constitution that states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” With the adoption of that and the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1868, the United States became the first national government in history to guarantee religious freedom in its basic laws. Many individuals paid for the privilege with their lives, including Jesus. It is something that we should value greatly. It is something we should protect, whatever the cost.

The ultimate issue in religious liberty is the freedom of each individual to relate to God independently. No person, church, government or any other force should deny what we have previously called the priesthood of every believer. Each person is born with, as God has planned it, full freedom to speak personally to God and follow God’s will for their life.

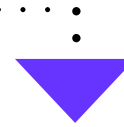
### Life Application:

Are you exercising the rights that you have? In the United States, we have the right to assemble together, to study God’s word, and to share our beliefs with others. Do you know God? Has anyone ever told you that the God of the universe loves you? He loves you so much that He sent His one and only Son to be the payment for your sin. That sin is what has kept you separated from God. Your sin built the wall that stands between you and God, but if you ask Him, God can remove that wall in an instant. God is ready at any moment to forgive you of your sins and to come into your life. Won’t you invite Him in right now?

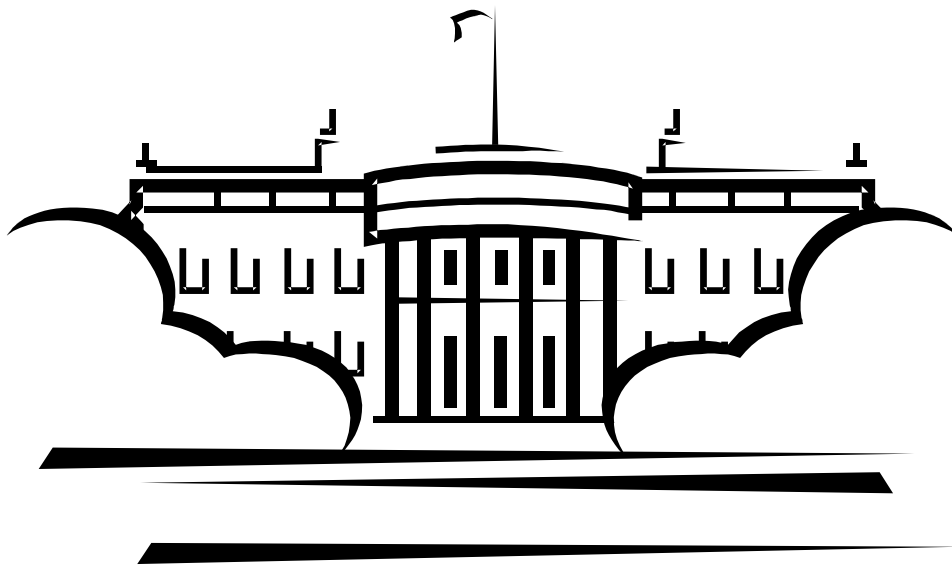
I’ll ask it again; are you exercising the rights that you have? Are you committed to joining other believers in Bible Study? Do you study God’s Word on your own? Do you share the good news of God’s love with the people you come into contact with daily? What if these rights were gone tomorrow, would you still be willing to stand for Christ, to study God’s Word, and to tell others? Will you commit yourself today, to taking a stand for Christ?



Planning for Lesson 48:  
End Times



- ◆ **Memory Verse Activity** - Use an outline of your hand to remember the memory verse. Trace your right hand onto construction paper or cardstock. On the thumb write, "Show proper respect to everyone." On the pointer finger write, "Love the brotherhood of believers," Continue until the entire verse, including the reference, has been copied to your handprint. Practice!
  
- ◆ Share stories of those who have been martyred or persecuted for Christ.
  
- ◆ Pray through 1 Timothy 2:1-8. Begin with parts of a verse at a time, encouraging your students to pray as instructed in the verse. For example: Read, "First, I want all of you to pray for everyone. Ask God to bless them. Give thanks for them. Pray for kings." Your students can pray for our current president and for the leaders of other nations. Continue by reading, "Pray for all who are in authority." Encourage your students to pray for senators, congressmen, policemen, judges, etc.
  
- ◆ Sing "God, Bless America," "There is Power in the Blood," "Why Do I Sing About Jesus?," "My Country, 'tis of Thee," "The Star Spangled Banner," etc.
  
- ◆ **Dig Deeper:** Read Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Discuss the verses. Then, talk about who our authorities are (president, government leaders, teachers, bosses, etc.) and what it means to obey them, attitude and all! Does that include following laws? Yes! Only some of them, the ones we choose? No. Talk about various laws, those that we sometimes see as insignificant. Talk about the heart of obedience.
  
- ◆ **Dig Deeper Still:** Begin talking about laws and authorities, but quickly move into the freedoms observed in this country. Follow up by talking about spiritual freedom. Read John 8:31-47. Once, we were slaves to sin. As believers we are no longer slaves.



**Show proper respect  
to everyone: Love  
the brotherhood of believers,  
fear God,  
honor the king.  
I Peter 2:17**



# Word Search



P	G	E	N	S	P	I	H	S	R	E	D	A	E	L	C	T	E
A	N	S	A	H	O	N	O	K	I	Y	A	T	G	O	R	P	V
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Show \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_:  
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 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

**1 Peter 2:17**

# Word Search



P	G	E	N	S	P	I	H	S	R	E	D	A	E	L	C	T	E
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L	E	B	S	A	B	E	V	E	R	Y	O	W	M	E	R	C	Y

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