

“A Declaration of Dependence”

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INTRODUCTION

Last weekend we celebrated Independence Day in our country. But God has put in each of us, a need for dependence, not only on Him, but also on others. We are responsible to God and to one another, but we are also under the authority of the government. This study considers how we should live our lives as “American Christians.”

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

How did you celebrate Independence Day?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Commit Ourselves to God

Q1. Read Romans 12:1-2, Colossians 3:17

Romans 12:1 tells us we are to offer our body as a living sacrifice to God and Colossians 3:17 tells us “whatever” we do should be done in the name of the Lord. What are some of the ways that we can choose to live our lives as a “sacrifice” to God? The very next verse in Romans reminds us not to be transformed to the pattern of this world. What do you see as “patterns of this world” that compete with God’s good, pleasing and perfect will for our lives?

Work for Family Health

Q2. Read Ephesians 5:22- 27, Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Ephesians 6:4

God has a design for the family that reflects the relationship he desires to share with us. But emulating that perfect design is seldom easy. It takes humility for a wife to submit to her husband, and courage for a husband to sacrifice himself for his wife. (Ephesians 5:22-27) Similarly, as parents, we must not frustrate our children but talk to them and train them in God’s instructions and commandments (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). What is one role that you occupy in your family that you would like to see improved; parent, child, husband or wife? What is one thing you can do that would improve it?

Strengthen the Local Church

Q3. Read Ephesians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-28, Hebrews 10:24-25

In Ephesians 4:16 we find many powerful truths about the church packed into one concise statement. First of all we see that it is from Christ that the body grows and is built up. Next we see the body is a composite of many parts that are joined together and that as each part does its work, the body is built up in love. When you consider New Life Community Church, do you usually think of a building, a pastor, or do you think of all the people sitting in the seats around you each weekend? The body of Christ, as it is reflected in the local church, is made up of all its members. 1 Corinthians 12:27 says you are the body of Christ and each of you has a part in it. What opportunities are you aware of to “do your part” at New Life? What activities

or events have you been part of that help you feel “joined together” with the rest of New Life Community Church?

Be Responsible Citizens

Q4. Read Acts 5:29, 1 Peter 2:13-14, Romans 13:1-4, 1 Timothy 2:1-2

It has been said of Christians, “We are in the world but not of the world.” In effect we have dual citizenship – both on the earth, and in God’s kingdom. Certainly we have seen times when being subject to the government challenges our faith. We can expect that there will be times when, as with Peter, “We must obey God rather than man.” (Acts 5:29) But more commonly, we are called to be subject to those in places of civil authority. What is the proper purpose of governing authority indicated in 1 Peter 2:13-14 and Romans 13:1-4? What are some historical and contemporary examples of a government failing to uphold the concept of “doing good” expressed in Romans 13:4? What do you feel are some appropriate responses available to you when the law of the land is in opposition to the laws of God?

With your group, read through 1 Timothy 2:1-2 aloud, then offer up prayers for those in authority.

WRAP-UP

As a nation, we have much to celebrate and much for which to be thankful! Living as American Christians means exercising dual citizenship in both an earthly and heavenly kingdom. First and foremost we must commit ourselves to God. Then within our homes we are responsible to diligently promote a Godly, healthy family. As part of Christ’s body we must also do our part to build a healthy, loving local church. And finally, as responsible citizens we are to pray for those in authority, and abide by the laws of our government. If there is conflict between the laws of God and laws of man, we must obey God rather than man- prayerfully and lovingly.

Memory Verse

Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him. Mark 12:17 ESV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life:_____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space)_____

Challenge:

This week, if political issues arise that you disagree with, pray first, then ask God to help you build more bridges, and fewer walls as you respectfully defend your faith.

Q1

Romans 12:1-2 NIV - 1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Colossians 3:17 NIV - 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Q2

Ephesians 5:22-27 NIV - 22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NIV - 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Ephesians 6:4 NIV - 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Q3

Ephesians 4:16 NIV - 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-28 NIV - 12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body--whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.

Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV - 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Q4

Acts 5:29 ESV - 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

1 Peter 2:13-14 ESV - 13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

Read Romans 13:1-4 in your Bible

1 Timothy 2:1-2 NIV - 1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people-- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Prayer requests con't _____
