

LETTERS & DEVOTION

Bible: Christian Ethics and Vocation

Free sample: Unit 1, Lessons 1 to 8

These are 8 lessons from *Bible: Christian Ethics and Vocation: Grade 12*, a Grade 12 year a parent runs at the kitchen table. Each lesson is a short script for you, a page to read together, and a practice sheet you may copy for your household. Answers are at the back.

Bible: Christian Ethics and Vocation: Grade 12. Sample edition.

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Letters & Devotion is a Christian curriculum: a Bible course in every grade from the King James text, and science taught as scientists teach it, including an old earth. Standards references: Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.



BIBLE · UNIT 1

How to Decide

Nine weeks building a method rather than a list: what ethics is and why lookup fails, conscience and how it is miseducated, what the law is for, why grace does not cancel obligation, and three questions to run on any act. Then the hard shapes: colliding duties, disputable matters, disobeying a government, and how to argue without caricaturing anyone.

In this unit

1. Ethics is not a lookup table
2. Conscience, and how it goes wrong
3. What the law is for
4. Grace, and why it does not cancel ethics
5. Three questions to ask about any act
6. When rules collide: the midwives
7. Disputable things
8. When the state is wrong

Ethics is not a lookup table

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Ethics is not a lookup table” (Micah 6:6-8 and Matthew 22:34-40), and say Micah 6:8 by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Ethics is not a lookup table

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Micah 6:6-8 and Matthew 22:34-40, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Most of the moral questions waiting for you after you leave home are not covered by a verse. There is no verse about the job offer, the roommate, the loan, the ventilator. People who treat the Bible as a lookup table do one of two things when the table comes up empty. They invent a verse, or they decide the question is not a religious one. Both are failures, and the second is more common than the first.

Micah is answering a man who wants a price list: how many rams, how much oil, buys a clear conscience. The answer refuses the format entirely. Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly is not a rule you can look up; it is a description of a kind of person.

Jesus does the same thing when he is asked which single commandment ranks highest. He answers with two, and says the whole law and the prophets hang on them. Hang is load-bearing: the rest is not deleted, it is suspended from these.

So this year is training, not a reference book. The target is that in twelve months you can reason to a defensible answer, say why, and know which parts of your answer are certain and which are your best judgment. Those are different, and confusing them is how people become both arrogant and wrong.

MEMORY WORK (Micah 6:8):

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

DISCUSS:

1. Micah's questioner escalates from calves to rams to ten thousand rivers of oil to his own firstborn. What is he actually trying to buy, and why does more of it not help?
2. If the two great commandments really cover everything, what were the other six hundred and thirteen for?
3. Name one decision you will personally have to make in the next twelve months that no verse addresses directly.

WRITTEN WORK: Start the notebook you will keep all year. On page one, write the hardest moral question you actually have right now, in one sentence. Under it write your current answer in three sentences, and under that write the strongest objection to your answer in three more sentences. Date it. You will open this page again in week 36 and you may not edit it before then.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Ethics is not a lookup table

1. The essay says people who treat the Bible as a lookup table do one of two things when the table comes up empty. What are the two?

- ☐ A They invent a verse, or they decide the question is not a religious one
- ☐ B They give up on the Bible, or they obey the closest rule they can find
- ☐ C They ask a pastor, or they wait until they have a strong feeling about it

2. Micah 6:8 names three things the LORD requires. What are they?

- ☐ A To fear God, to keep the commandments, and to give a tenth
- ☐ B To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God
- ☐ C To offer calves, then rams, then ten thousand rivers of oil, item by item, until the price finally feels right

3. Jesus says the whole law and the prophets hang on the two great commandments. The essay calls the word hang load-bearing. Why?

- ☐ A Because the rest of the law is not deleted; it is suspended from those two
- ☐ B Because these two are the heaviest and hardest of the commandments to keep
- ☐ C Because the rest of the law is replaced, and only two commandments are left

4. Micah's questioner escalates from calves to rams to ten thousand rivers of oil. What is he actually doing, according to the essay?

- ☐ A Showing that he is more devout than his neighbours
- ☐ B Asking which sacrifice God prefers, and expecting a ranking
- ☐ C Trying to buy a clear conscience, and asking what it costs

Conscience, and how it goes wrong

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Conscience, and how it goes wrong” (Romans 2:12-16 and Romans 14:13-23), and say Romans 2:15 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Conscience, and how it goes wrong

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Romans 2:12-16 and Romans 14:13-23, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Paul says people who never received the law still show its work written in them, and their conscience testifies. That is a strong claim: moral knowledge is not the private property of the religious.

But conscience is a witness, not a judge. A witness can be honest and still be mistaken, and a witness can be coached. Yours has been coached your whole life by your family, your friends, and everything you have watched.

This produces two failure modes. A conscience can be too loose, having gone quiet about something it should have flagged, usually because you did it often enough. And a conscience can be too tight, firing guilt at things that are not wrong at all.

Paul takes the second one seriously in Romans 14. He says the food is clean, and then says that for the man who believes it is unclean, eating it is sin, because he acted against his own conviction. Violating your conscience is training yourself to ignore it, which is the real damage.

So the work is not to obey conscience blindly or to override it whenever it is inconvenient. The work is to educate it, on purpose, with scripture and with people who will tell you the truth, and then to obey the educated version.

MEMORY WORK (Romans 2:15 (part)):

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness

DISCUSS:

1. What is the difference between feeling guilty and being guilty? Give an example of each from your own experience.
2. Paul says the man who eats while doubting is condemned, even though the food is fine. Why would God care more about the doubting than about the food?
3. Name one thing your conscience is quiet about now that it used to flag. What happened in between?

WRITTEN WORK: Write two pages. Page one: describe one thing you feel guilty about that you have concluded is not actually wrong, and argue the case. Page two: describe one thing you no longer feel much about that you suspect is actually wrong, and argue that case. Do not resolve either one in the same sitting. Bring both to a parent and ask them to press on the weaker of the two.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Conscience, and how it goes wrong

1. Paul says people who never received the law still show its work written in them. What does the essay conclude from that?

- ☐ A Everyone who follows their conscience is already keeping the law
- ☐ B Moral knowledge is not the private property of the religious
- ☐ C The law was never necessary in the first place

2. The memory verse says the work of the law is written where, and what is conscience doing?

- ☐ A Written in the heavens, with conscience keeping the record
- ☐ B Written in the law of Moses, with conscience judging it
- ☐ C Written in their hearts, with conscience bearing witness

3. The essay names two ways a conscience goes wrong. Which describes the loose one?

- ☐ A It has gone quiet about something it should still be flagging, usually because you did it often enough
- ☐ B It fires guilt at all sorts of things that are not actually wrong at all, just because they feel unfamiliar
- ☐ C It disagrees with what your family taught you

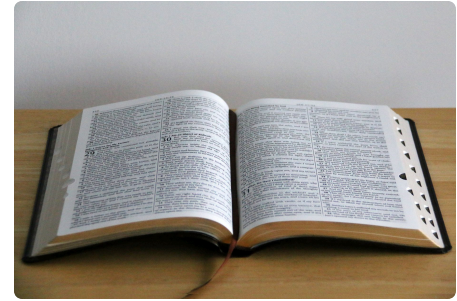
4. In Romans 14 Paul says the food is clean, and then says that for the man who believes it is unclean, eating it is sin. Why?

- ☐ A Because he acted against his own conviction, and that trains him to ignore it
- ☐ B Because he ate in front of someone who would be upset by it
- ☐ C Because the food really was unclean for him no matter what it turned out to be for anyone else at the table

What the law is for

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “What the law is for” (Exodus 20:1-17 and Romans 7:7-13), and say Romans 7:7 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: What the law is for

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Exodus 20:1-17 and Romans 7:7-13, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Paul asks whether the law is itself sin, and answers no, twice, hard. Then he says something odd: he would not have known what coveting was without the commandment against it.

That is the law working as a diagnostic. A commandment does not create the desire; it names it, and naming it is what makes it visible. Most people do not discover their own greed by introspection. They discover it when something they wanted goes to someone else.

Christians have historically said the law does at least three jobs: it restrains harm in a society, it shows you what you actually are, and it shows a person who wants to do good what good looks like in practice.

Notice where the commandments start. Not with a rule, but with a rescue: I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. The rescue comes first and the rules describe how rescued people live. Reverse that order and you get religion as a payment plan, which is the thing Micah's questioner was already trying in week 1.

The last commandment is the one that cannot be enforced by any court, because it is entirely internal. That placement is not an accident. The list ends by moving from what

MEMORY WORK (Romans 7:7 (part)):

I had not known sin, but by the law

DISCUSS:

1. Which of the ten could a government actually enforce, and which could it never enforce? What does that split tell you about what the law is doing?
2. Paul says the commandment was ordained to life, and he found it to death. What does he mean?
3. Coveting is the one nobody can see. Name something you have wanted this year that you would not have admitted to wanting.

WRITTEN WORK: Take the ten commandments and write, for each one, the modern version of the violation that a person in your town could commit without anyone calling it a crime. One sentence each. Then pick the one you found easiest to write and explain in half a page why that one was easy.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: What the law is for

1. Paul says there is something he would not have known without the commandment against it. What?

- ☐ A Murder, since that is the command everybody already agrees is obviously wrong
- ☐ B Idolatry ☐ C Coveting

2. The memory verse is 'I had not known sin, but by the law.' What is Paul claiming?

- ☐ A That obeying the law is what removed his sin
- ☐ B That the law itself is what produced the sinful desire in him, rather than merely exposing something already there
- ☐ C That the law is what made his sin visible to him

3. The essay says the ten commandments do not open with a rule. What do they open with?

- ☐ A A promise of long life in the land
- ☐ B A rescue: I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt
- ☐ C A warning, spelled out at length, about the harsh things that happen to anyone who dares break them

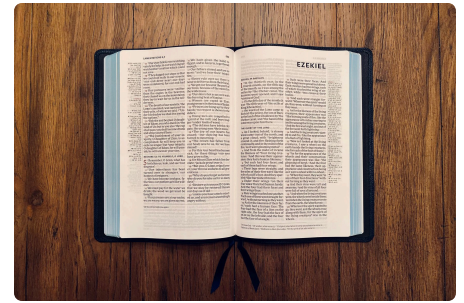
4. Christians have historically said the law does at least three jobs. Which set does the essay give?

- ☐ A It earns favour, it proves sincerity, and it secures a reward
- ☐ B It restrains harm in a society, it shows you what you actually are, and it shows a person who wants to do good what good looks like in practice
- ☐ C It restrains harm in everyday dealings, it settles disputes that come before a court, and it defines exactly where the nation's borders are to be drawn and defended

Grace, and why it does not cancel ethics

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Grace, and why it does not cancel ethics” (Romans 6:1-14 and Ephesians 2:1-10), and say Ephesians 2:10 by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Grace, and why it does not cancel ethics

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Romans 6:1-14 and Ephesians 2:1-10, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Paul anticipates the obvious objection to grace and states it himself: shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? He would not have raised it if nobody was saying it. His answer is not a threat. It is that the question misunderstands what happened. You do not go on living in a house you have moved out of because the rent is now free. Ephesians puts it as a sequence that people constantly get backwards. Saved by grace, not of works, so that nobody can boast, and then created for good works that were prepared in advance. Works come after and they still come. Grace does not remove the good works, it removes the accounting.

This matters practically. A person working off a debt behaves differently from a person who has been forgiven one: the first is anxious, calculating, resentful of anyone who costs them, and quick to compare. Much of what people call Christian legalism is just debt behavior.

So the reason to be good, in this account, is not to secure something. It is that you have been made a certain kind of thing and the works were already lying there waiting. That is a stranger and more demanding motivation than fear, and it does not run out when you succeed.

MEMORY WORK (Ephesians 2:10):

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

DISCUSS:

1. If grace really is free, what actually stops a person from using it as a license? Give the best answer you can, then say whether you find it convincing.
2. Ephesians says the good works were prepared beforehand. Does that make them less yours?
3. Think of the last time you did something good. Honestly: were you paying a debt, buying approval, or something else?

WRITTEN WORK: Write a one-page letter to a person who says Christianity is a system for earning God's approval. Do not caricature them; state their view in a way they would accept, then answer it using Romans 6 and Ephesians 2. Then, on a separate page, write the strongest reply that person could make to your letter.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Grace, and why it does not cancel ethics

1. Who raises the objection 'shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound'?
 - ☐ A Nobody; the essay says it is a modern objection
 - ☐ B The opponents Paul is writing against in Rome
 - ☐ C Paul himself, before anyone else can

2. According to the memory verse, when were the good works prepared?
 - ☐ A Only after a person has spent years proving themselves faithful enough to deserve them
 - ☐ B Beforehand; God had before ordained that we should walk in them
 - ☐ C At the moment a person decides to do them

3. The essay answers the abuse-of-grace objection with an image about a house. What is the image?
 - ☐ A You do not rebuild a house you were never given the deed to
 - ☐ B You do not go on living in a house you have moved out of because the rent is now free
 - ☐ C You do not tear down a perfectly good house just because someone else already paid off the mortgage on it

4. The essay says Ephesians 2 gives a sequence people constantly reverse. What is the sequence?
 - ☐ A Grace and works together, each supplying half of what is needed
 - ☐ B Good works first, piled up patiently over years, so that grace is eventually deserved and earned
 - ☐ C Saved by grace and not of works, so nobody can boast, and then created for good works

Three questions to ask about any act

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Three questions to ask about any act” (1 Samuel 24:1-15 and Hebrews 5:11-14), and say Hebrews 5:14 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Three questions to ask about any act

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: 1 Samuel 24:1-15 and Hebrews 5:11-14, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Hebrews describes moral maturity as trained senses. Not more rules memorized. Trained, by use, the way a mechanic hears a bad bearing that you cannot hear at all. Here is the training method this year will use. Ask three questions about any act, in order. What kind of act is this in itself? What will it actually produce, for everyone it touches, including me? And what kind of person does doing it repeatedly make me? Those three are not a ranking. Philosophers have built entire ethical systems on each one alone, and each system alone produces monsters: the first can justify catastrophe for the sake of a clean rule, the second can justify anything if the numbers work out, the third can collapse into self-improvement while people around you suffer.

David in the cave is a live example. He has opportunity, motive, an anointing, and a cave full of men telling him this is providence. He cuts a corner of a robe and it bothers his conscience, which is a strange detail to invent.

Run the three questions on him. The act itself: killing the reigning king. The outcome: he takes the throne years early and every future rival learns the method. The person it makes: a man who takes what is promised rather than receives it. He passes on all three, and it costs him years in the wilderness.

MEMORY WORK (Hebrews 5:14 (part)):

even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil

DISCUSS:

1. Apply the three questions to David's choice. Do all three agree? Where does each one get its answer?
2. Which of the three questions do you naturally reach for first? What does relying only on that one cost you?
3. Take a decision you made this week that you did not think about at the time and run all three questions on it.

WRITTEN WORK: Write a one-page case brief on the cave, in this format, which you will use all year: the facts in five sentences; the question stated as a yes-or-no; the argument for yes; the argument for no; your ruling; and the strongest thing that could still be said against your ruling. Keep the format. Twelve more of these are coming.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Three questions to ask about any act

1. What does David do in the cave, and what happens next in him?
 - ☐ A He leaves the cave without Saul knowing he was ever there
 - ☐ B He kills Saul on the spot, and only starts to regret it once the deed is already done
 - ☐ C He cuts a corner off Saul's robe, and it bothers his conscience
2. Hebrews describes moral maturity as senses exercised by reason of use. What does the essay say that is not?
 - ☐ A It is not more rules memorised; it is training, the way a mechanic hears a bad bearing you cannot hear at all
 - ☐ B It is not available to anyone who has not first studied ethics formally for years in a classroom or from a proper textbook
 - ☐ C It is not something a young person can begin, since it takes decades
3. What are the three questions the week teaches you to ask about any act?
 - ☐ A Is it legal; will anyone find out; and can I live with it
 - ☐ B What kind of act is this in itself; what will it actually produce for everyone it touches, including me; and what kind of person does doing it repeatedly make me
 - ☐ C What does scripture directly and explicitly say about it; what does my own particular church happen to teach about it; and what does my own conscience, left entirely on its own, say about it
4. The case brief format has six parts and ends with one that most people leave off. What is the last part?
 - ☐ A A verse that supports the ruling
 - ☐ B A short summary of everything you personally learned while writing the whole brief
 - ☐ C The strongest thing that could still be said against your ruling

When rules collide: the midwives

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “When rules collide: the midwives” (Exodus 1:15-21 and Joshua 2:1-14), and say Exodus 1:20 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: When rules collide: the midwives

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Exodus 1:15-21 and Joshua 2:1-14, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Two women are ordered by the head of state to kill infants. They do not comply, and when questioned they give an answer that is not true. The text says God dealt well with them and built them houses.

Rahab does something similar and ends up named in the genealogy of Jesus and in the faith chapter of Hebrews. Neither text pauses to work out the ethics of the lie. That silence is itself data, and honest readers have disagreed for centuries about what to do with it.

There are three serious Christian answers. One: lying is always wrong, the women sinned in the lie and were commended for the courage, not the deception. Two: the duty to speak truth is owed to those with a right to it, and a man hunting infants has forfeited that right. Three: in a genuinely tragic collision the lesser evil is still an evil, and you choose it and confess it.

Notice what none of the three does. None says the lie was fine and easy. Each of them costs something, which is a decent sign you are looking at the real shape of a hard case rather than a comfortable exit.

The reason to spend a week here is not to license lying. It is that you will meet collisions, and a person who has never thought about one in advance will improvise, badly, under

pressure, at three in the morning.

MEMORY WORK (Exodus 1:20 (part)):

Therefore God dealt well with the midwives

DISCUSS:

1. Which of the three answers is strongest, and what does it cost you to hold it?
2. The midwives told Pharaoh something false to his face. Is there a moral difference between deceiving a tyrant and refusing to answer him? Is refusing always available?
3. Has anyone ever asked you to lie for them? What did you do, and would you do it again?

WRITTEN WORK: Write a case brief on this one, and then do the hard part: whichever of the three positions you find least persuasive, write a full page defending it as well as you can. Someone holding that view should be able to read your page and say yes, that is what I think.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

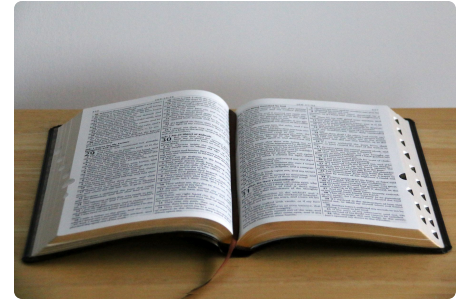
Practice: When rules collide: the midwives

1. What are the midwives ordered to do, and what do they do?
 - ☐ A They are ordered to leave Egypt, and they refuse to go
 - ☐ B They are ordered to kill infants, and they obey under protest while quietly doing as little as they possibly can
 - ☐ C They are ordered by the head of state to kill infants, and they do not comply
2. The memory verse says 'Therefore God dealt well with the midwives.' What else does the passage say he did for them?
 - ☐ A He gave them land in Goshen
 - ☐ B He made them houses
 - ☐ C He hid them from Pharaoh for the rest of his reign
3. Where does Rahab turn up later, according to the essay?
 - ☐ A In the book of Judges, as one of the judges
 - ☐ B In the genealogy of Jesus and in the faith chapter of Hebrews
 - ☐ C Nowhere else at all; the essay says her story simply ends right there in the book of Joshua
4. The essay gives three serious Christian answers to the midwives' lie. What do all three have in common?
 - ☐ A All three finally permit the lie
 - ☐ B All three agree that the midwives would have done better to simply say nothing at all to Pharaoh
 - ☐ C None of them says the lie was fine and easy; each one costs something

Disputable things

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Disputable things” (Romans 14:1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13), and say Romans 14:5 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Disputable things

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Romans 14:1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Paul takes two live controversies in his churches, food offered to idols and which days are holy, and refuses to settle either one. He tells both sides to stop despising each other and to be convinced in their own minds.

That is remarkable given how directive he is elsewhere. He is drawing a line between matters where the church must speak with one voice and matters where it must not, and he is willing to let people be wrong in the second category rather than force uniformity.

But he does not make everything optional. In the same letters he gives commands with no negotiation at all. The skill being taught is category assignment: knowing which drawer a question goes in before you start arguing about it.

He adds a second rule that cuts against the first. If your freedom will genuinely wreck someone weaker, do not use it in front of them. Note the asymmetry: the free person restrains himself, and the scrupulous person is not told to loosen up. Strength carries the cost.

The failure this passage is designed to prevent is the one you will meet in every church and dorm you ever join: a person who has correctly worked out a disputable matter,

MEMORY WORK (Romans 14:5 (part)):

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

DISCUSS:

1. Make two lists: three things you think all Christians must agree on, and three things you think Christians can differ on. What test did you use to sort them?
2. Paul tells the strong to give up their freedom for the weak. Does that reward the scrupulous person for being scrupulous? Is that a problem?
3. Name a practice in your own household that you now suspect is a disputable matter rather than a command.

WRITTEN WORK: Write a two-column page. Left column: five specific practices Christians you know disagree about, alcohol, tattoos, Sunday, schooling, entertainment, whatever is live where you are. Right column: for each, the best argument of the side you do not hold. Then write a short paragraph on which one you got wrong.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Disputable things

1. Which two live controversies does Paul refuse to settle in these passages?
 - ☐ A Marriage and divorce, and the order of a church service
 - ☐ B Circumcision, and whether to pay Roman taxes
 - ☐ C Food offered to idols, and which days are holy

2. The memory verse from Romans 14:5 says what?
 - ☐ A Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink
 - ☐ B Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind
 - ☐ C Let every man esteem others better than himself in absolutely every single case

3. The essay calls the skill being taught here category assignment. What does that mean?
 - ☐ A Knowing which drawer a question goes in, one voice or many, before you start arguing about it
 - ☐ B Sorting people into the strong and the weak before you have even started talking to them at all
 - ☐ C Deciding in advance which arguments are worth having at all

4. Paul adds a second rule that cuts against the first: do not use your freedom in front of someone it will genuinely wreck. Who carries the cost?
 - ☐ A Both equally, by meeting in the middle
 - ☐ B The free person, who restrains himself; strength carries the cost
 - ☐ C The scrupulous person, who is simply told by Paul to loosen up and stop worrying

When the state is wrong

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “When the state is wrong” (Acts 4:13-31 and Daniel 3:8-30), and say Acts 5:29 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: When the state is wrong

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Acts 4:13-31 and Daniel 3:8-30, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Peter and John are given a lawful order by the legitimate authority of their own people, and they refuse it in open court, politely, and keep doing the thing they were told to stop.

Daniel's three friends do the same, and their answer is the sharpest sentence in the book. God is able to deliver us, and he will, but if not, we still will not serve your gods. The obedience is not contingent on the rescue.

Both cases share a shape worth naming. The command was specific, it required an act rather than a mere opinion, the refusal was public rather than sly, and the refusers accepted the penalty instead of evading it. That is civil disobedience with its bill paid.

It is worth being suspicious of how easy this is to claim. Everyone who defies an authority believes they are Peter in the courtroom. The test is not how strongly you feel about the order; it is whether the order actually requires you to do wrong, and whether you are willing to take the sentence.

Note also what these men do not do. They do not seize power, harm the officials, or lie about what they intend. The refusal is narrow. Almost all of the New Testament assumes ordinary submission to authority, which is what makes these exceptions readable as

MEMORY WORK (Acts 5:29 (part)):

We ought to obey God rather than men.

DISCUSS:

1. What made these cases genuine, and what would a counterfeit look like? Write three tests.
2. The three friends say God will deliver us, and if not, we still refuse. Why does that second half matter so much?
3. Is there anything you would go to jail rather than do? Answer honestly, including if the honest answer is that you do not know.

WRITTEN WORK: Case brief on a modern scenario: a law requires you to do something you believe is wrong, the penalty is real, and reasonable Christians in your own church disagree about whether the law is actually unjust. Invent the specifics or use a real one. Rule on it, and be specific about which of your three tests carries the most weight.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: When the state is wrong

1. What do Daniel's three friends say about being rescued?
 - ☐ A That rescue does not matter because the furnace cannot hurt them
 - ☐ B That God is able to deliver them and will, and that if not, they still will not serve his gods
 - ☐ C That God will certainly and definitely deliver them, which is exactly why they feel free to refuse
2. What does the memory verse from Acts say?
 - ☐ A We ought to obey God rather than men
 - ☐ B Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's
 - ☐ C Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers
3. The essay names a shape that both cases share. Which of these is one of its four marks?
 - ☐ A The refusers acted quietly so that the authorities would not notice
 - ☐ B The refusers removed the officials who gave the order
 - ☐ C The refusers accepted the penalty instead of evading it
4. What does the essay say these men did not do?
 - ☐ A They did not tell anyone else what they had decided
 - ☐ B They did not bother to appear in court at all, even once, when they were formally summoned
 - ☐ C They did not seize power, harm the officials, or lie about what they intended

Answer key

Bible

Lesson 1	1. A 2. B 3. A 4. C
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Lesson 2	1. B 2. C 3. A 4. A
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Lesson 3	1. C 2. C 3. B 4. B
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Lesson 4	1. C 2. B 3. B 4. C
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Lesson 5	1. C 2. A 3. B 4. C
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Lesson 6	1. C 2. B 3. B 4. C
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Lesson 7	1. C 2. B 3. A 4. B
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Lesson 8	1. B 2. A 3. C 4. C
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Unit 1 check-up	1. B 2. A 3. A 4. B 5. A 6. B 7. B 8. B 9. A 10. C 11. B 12. B 13. B 14. C 15. C 16. B
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