

SINFUL SILENCE

When Christians Neglect Their Civil Duty
Lessons for Bible Study Groups

Title: “Restoring the Standard” (Chapters 5 & 6)

Study Passages:

- ✚ 1. Psalm 89:14, Psalm 11:7, Deuteronomy 1:17, Exodus 34:6-7, Deuteronomy 10:18-19, Psalm 146:9, Proverbs 3:12
- ✚ 2. Exodus 6:1-9, Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 29:9-15, Luke 22:20, Romans 6:15-18, I Peter 2:9, Matthew 6:9, Leviticus 11:44-45, Leviticus 19:2, I Peter 1:16, I John 4:7-8, Romans 12:9, Deuteronomy 4:5-8, Deuteronomy 28:9-10, Deuteronomy 29:24-29, I Peter 2:12, John 13:34, 35, John 17:23, Ephesians 5:22-23
- ✚ 3. Isaiah 1:18-20 (Warning)
Exodus 20:1-4, Numbers 25:1-3, I Kings 11:4-9, I Kings 14:25-28, Deuteronomy 28:1-13; Deuteronomy 28:14-68, Isaiah 28:17, Isaiah 2:19-21

Introduction: Options:

- ✚ Pass out 3X5 index cards. Ask adults to think of one person in their lives whom they can say they respect the most. Direct them to write that person’s name down on the index card and what characteristics that person has to merit such respect. Discuss as a large group. *Transition the discussion by stating that today’s lesson is going to focus on characteristics of God and His people that merit civil action just like the characteristics of the people discussed merited respect.*
- ✚ Have this question posted on the overhead/board as students enter the room:
 - ***When has your character compelled you to try to hold someone else to a specific standard?*** Be as specific as possible. (I.e. “I tried to get my daughter to quit going out with a specific guy she was dating because I loved her and thought the relationship was harmful. etc.) Discuss. *Transition by helping students understand that today’s topic is going to focus on how who God is compels him to set specific standards for his people. Also, God has set up expectations of who is children are to be in covenant relationship with Him. Therefore, his children have responsibilities to act according to his standards. If not, judgment will come.*
- ✚ **Yarn Handcuffs:** Give each person a piece of yarn. Ask students to find a partner. Direct one partner to make handcuffs out of their yarn with loops large enough to slip their wrists in and out of. Ask that partner to go ahead and place the yarn handcuffs on both wrists. Direct the second partner to loop his or her string around the middle of his partner’s “handcuffs” before slipping his or her wrist into the other handcuff. The result will be that the partners are



linked together while they have their handcuffs on. Tell them that the object of the game is to get disconnected from their partner where both partners still have their handcuffs on individually, but they are no longer connected to their partner. Give them a few minutes to work. (Answer: One partner will pull his handcuff through the wrist of his partner's handcuff loop and continue pulling until his handcuff makes a loop around his partner's hand. Pull the loop around his partner's hand and the two partners will become disconnected.- This will probably be an activity that the leader will need to attempt before teaching to make sure directions are clear and the answer is understood.) After a few minutes show one pair the answer. They can then either show others the answer or simply be "free" and wait for others to try to figure out the answer. **Debrief:** What compelled you to find the answer and follow the instructions given? For some it may simply be fun and because someone else told them to. For others, it may be because they wanted to be "free". *Explain that today's topic is going to focus on what compels God to direct his people towards his standards along with what should and does compel his people to respond as they do.*

1. God's nature reflects justice, concern, and love that compel him to hold his people to specific civil standards.

Biblical Truth: *God's nature reflects justice, concern, and love that compel him to hold his people to specific civil standards.*

Life Application: *Understanding God's nature can help believers understand why keeping specific standards are both necessary and beneficial.*

Life Change Outcome: *Identify one way in which you are not reflecting God's nature and one change that you can make to do so.*

Teaching Activities

- ✚ Write the following scripture verses on the board: Psalm 89:14, Psalm 11:7, Deuteronomy 1:17, Exodus 34:6-7, Deuteronomy 10:18-19, Psalm 146:9, Proverbs 3:12
- ✚ Underneath the verses, write the following three headings:
 - **Just** **Concerned** **Loving**
- ✚ Divide students into small groups of 4-5. Ask students to work together in their groups to read the scriptures listed and to list all of the characteristics of God listed in each verse.
- ✚ Next, they should look at the characteristics listed from each verse and categorize each verse under appropriate headings. (i.e. What characteristic of God (just, concerned, or loving) does Psalm 89:14 express?) Students should be prepared to list the various characteristics of God and how each verse shows the general characteristic under which it was categorized. Some verses can be placed under more than one category. But, some will lean more specifically toward one category.
- ✚ **Ask:** How does God's nature relate to people's responsibilities in keeping his standards, especially related to civil duties?



✚ **Explain:** *Justice, Concern, and Love comprise God's nature. They define who he is. God cannot go against his nature, and therefore, because he has these components of his nature, he must hold his people to standards that he sets which show his nature. He cannot be unjust, and therefore, he must hold his people to standards that are just. He cannot be unconcerned; therefore, he must hold his people to standards that show his concern. He cannot be unloving, and therefore, he must hold his people to standards that show his love. These standards are based on God's nature- and based on simply what is best for his people- as who He is defines what is best for His people.*

✚ **Ask:** What does this mean for us sitting in this room today? Is this something simply good to know?

✚ **Explain:** *God's people are to reflect his nature.(Genesis 1:26-27, Ephesians 5:1)*

✚ **Ask:** How are you reflecting God's nature? (This can be rhetorical, or direct students to get in small groups to discuss)

✚ **Transition:** *"Now that we have looked at the nature of God, let us now look at the nature that God's people are supposed to demonstrate in reflection of who God is."*

2. God's People have moral responsibilities to personally embrace God's civil concerns and reflect those concerns to the world.

Biblical Truth: *God's people have specific standards that they are to follow based upon covenant relationship with God, himself; they are set apart to be his people, to be like Him and follow him in obedience, and to reflect his very nature.*

Life Application: *God's people are to live as He commanded.*

Life Change Outcome: *Identify one way in which you can better reflect who you are as a child of God and one change that can take place in the upcoming week to demonstrate that you are in a covenant relationship with God.*

Teaching Activities

✚ Explain: *God set up specific standards for his people based upon the covenant relationship that he established with Israel. The Israelites were set apart to be his people, were commanded to act in ways that were like His ways, and were expected to reflect him.*

✚ Write the following on the board:

- HIS PEOPLE
- LIKE HIM
- REFLECT HIM

✚ Explain: *Today, we are going to continue looking at the topic of why Christians are to follow civil standards by looking at God's people in relationship to who they are to be in covenant relationship with Him. Each of you are going to be placed into a group today to look at one characteristic that is to describe a child of God. You are going to look at what God expected of His covenant relationship, Israel, and then do a comparison of what God expects of people today who are under the new covenant of Christ.*



✚ Divide students into three groups. Hand each group a card with the following scriptures written on it:

✚ **GROUP 1: HIS PEOPLE**

- Exodus 6:1-9, Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 29:9-15,
- Luke 22:20, Romans 6:15-18, I Peter 2:9, Matthew 6:9

✚ **GROUP 2: LIKE HIM**

- Leviticus 11:44-45, Leviticus 19:2
- I Peter 1:16, I John 4:7-8, Romans 12:9

✚ **GROUP 3: REFLECT HIM**

- Deuteronomy 4:5-8, Deuteronomy 28:9-10, Deuteronomy 29:24-29
- I Peter 2:12, John 13:34, 35, John 17:23, Ephesians 5:22-23

✚ Ask students to look up each of the verses and make a comparison on paper of what God's people were expected to do/be under each covenant. Group 1 will need to concentrate on who the people of God are in relationship to God himself.

| God's People: Old Covenant | God's People: New Covenant |
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- ✚ When students are finished, complete a master list. Look at the characteristics of God's people under each covenant.
- ✚ **Ask:** In looking at Christians' responsibilities then and now, how are we to live today?
- ✚ **Ask:** How does that have application to looking at civil standards? (*God's People have moral responsibilities to personally embrace God's civil concerns and reflect those concerns to the world.*)
- ✚ **Ask:** What are ways that individuals in this room can apply biblical truth discussed today to the here and now, everyday world's that we find ourselves in? Take time for large group discussion.
- ✚ **Transition:** *Because God has commanded his children to act as though they are his children, when they don't judgment occurs This was seen among those who were in covenant relationship as well as those who were not. His standards are to be upheld period.*



3. Neglecting God's standards leads to national judgment.

Biblical Truth: *Neglecting God's standards led to judgment for the people of Judah individually and nationally.*

Life Application: *Christians today need to understand that consequences result from not following God's standards; God warns his people and brings judgment even today.*

Life Change Outcome: *Identify specific ways in which God may be warning America as a nation for not following his standards, and identify one way in which you can make changes in the upcoming week that will lead others to take note of warnings that are taking place so that changes can be made.*

Teaching Activities

- ✚ Review Isaiah 1:17 and list the three things the Lord commanded his people to do. (Seek justice, Relieve the oppressed, and Defend the orphan and the widow)
- ✚ Direct students to Isaiah 1:18-20 (Warning)
- ✚ **Ask:** What would happen if God's people were obedient? What would happen if they were disobedient?
- ✚ **Explain:** *Today, with the idea in mind that God's people knew what to obey and consequences for obedience and disobedience, we are going to look at some specific commandments that God gave to his people and their response. We know from our previous study, how they were commanded to respond. However, we are going to see how they actually responded.*
- ✚ **Direct one student to read aloud** Exodus 20:1-4.
- ✚ **Ask:** What was commanded?
- ✚ **Ask for volunteers to read the following three texts aloud:**
 - Numbers 25:1-3, I Kings 11:4-9, I Kings 14:25-28
- ✚ **Ask:** How did God's people go directly against what He had commanded them?
- ✚ **Ask:** What consequences did Solomon and Rehoboam reap from their disobedience?
- ✚ **Direct students to Deuteronomy 28.** Explain context: The Mosaic covenant was a gracious covenant extended to the people of Israel. But, blessings under the covenant were dependant on the people's obedience. Chapter 28 gives account to the specific blessings and curses that would result from obedience and disobedience.
- ✚ Ask students to look at verses 1-13 and call aloud blessings for obedience. Next ask them to look at verses 14-68 and call aloud curses for disobedience.
- ✚ **Ask for volunteers to read the following two texts aloud:**
 - Isaiah 28:17, Isaiah 2:19-21
- ✚ **Ask:** What consequences resulted from disobedience to God's commands from these passages? (natural disasters/earthquakes/hail)
- ✚ **Ask:** In looking at the specific consequences of obedience and disobedience, how do you think you would have wanted to respond to God? Why do you think that the people responded in disobedience?
- ✚ **Ask:** Why did the people choose death over life that eventually led to their destruction and exile from the promised land?



- ✚ **Ask:** Do people today make choices just as the people of Israel did?
- ✚ **Ask:** Are people today under the same consequences? What warning was given in Psalm 2:10-12? What about Isaiah 24:1-3?
- ✚ **Explain:** *Today, God continues to show his mercy because he has not brought forth what he promised in Isaiah 24. However, these warnings and examples of God's dealings with his people, should serve as warnings to his people today to turn from wicked ways and obey his commands. Those commands include being obedient in civil matters as a nation.*
- ✚ **Divide students into small groups of 3-4.** Ask them to get together and discuss possible warnings that the Lord has given the people of America today because of its disobedience.
- ✚ In small groups, direct students to close in prayer praying for America as a nation to return to God and to heed to warnings discussed. Ask for students to identify one way in which they can heed such warnings on an individual basis and to pray for not only the nation, but for individuals to make changes as well.

