

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

***Relate as Christians to Government***  
**Romans 13:1-7**

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### Gathering Time Leader:

### Bible Study Leader:

The governments that control the region where you live may or may not be sympathetic with your religious beliefs or practice. Discuss with your group the fact that the Roman government and the Jewish government of Paul's day were opposed and even hostile

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*Relate as Christians to Government* – 04-13-12-en

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toward Christians, their worship of Jesus as Lord and God—and their insistence on sharing their beliefs with others. Encourage the participants to bear that constantly in mind as they study Paul’s teachings regarding relationships of Christians with governments.

**Worship Time Leader:**

Remember to ensure that the music is ready to be sung and/or played. The smooth use of music that is practiced and known by the group without extra comments or other distractions enhances worship. Introduce and learn new songs during or after the **Gathering Time** when it is more appropriate for inclusion than is the **Worship and Commitment Time**.

You may wish to make each family a copy of the “Celtic Breastplate Prayer” found on the final page of this session. You will use it as a congregational benediction. Your congregation might wish to take copies home for use with family devotionals.

**Music Sources:**

**Majesty**, *The Worship Hymnal* #297; CCLI# 1527

**The King is Coming**, *The Worship Hymnal* #291; CCLI #3477

**Song for the Nations**, *The Worship Hymnal* #365; CCLI #20340

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Relate as Christians to Government*****Focal Text**

Romans 13:1-7

**Background Text**

Romans 13:1-7

**Main Idea**

Christians are to submit themselves to human government as it fulfills its God-given role.

**Question to Explore**

What is the proper relationship between church and state and between Christians and their government?

**Teaching Aim**

To help participants summarize the teachings about the proper relationship between church and state and between Christians and their government.

**Gathering together:**

Encourage an older child to lead the group in a short game of “Simon Says....” (The leader performs a simple action such as touching his ear with the instruction “Simon says ‘Do this’”. Those playing the game mimic the leader’s actions but only if the instruction is worded as above. If it varies at all from this form the followers do not copy “Simon’s” action. Be sure all of the players understand the rules before the game begins.)

This commonly played children’s game is based on giving “Simon” a position of authority to which the participants voluntarily submit.

Investigate with the group why they allowed someone to tell them what to do. How did their relationship to the leader affect their willingness to participate? What if “Simon” had performed an action that hurt someone else?

## First thoughts:

One day, almost two hundred motorists were given speeding tickets at a construction zone. The officer that registered their speeds dressed as a highway construction worker and ran laser radar. He would radio the descriptions of the speeders to an array of motorcycle officers who would stop the vehicles and write the tickets. How do you feel about a speed trap like that? Is it fair? What would you do if you were caught like that? Today we will study a passage of Scripture that gives Christians guidelines for relating to government.

## Closing the Gathering Time:

Ask someone to pray that the members will grow more aware of God's role for authority figures in the lives of his people.

Sing **Majesty** after reminding everyone that ultimately Jesus is our authority and all of earth's kingdoms will one day submit to Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *Relate as Christians to Government*

#### **Focal Text**

Romans 13:1-7

#### **Background Text**

Romans 13:1-7

#### **Main Idea**

Christians are to submit themselves to human government as it fulfills its God-given role.

#### **Question to Explore**

What is the proper relationship between church and state and between Christians and their government?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help participants summarize the teachings about the proper relationship between church and state and between Christians and their government.

### **Introduction to your personal study:**

Why should I vote? Why should I have to leave my work/home to serve on jury duty? I'm a Christian; I don't have time to take part in the dirty political system. I'm a member of the heavenly kingdom; I don't want to get involved with the world. It won't hurt for me to go over the speed limit on the highway. Why should I be strictly honest on my taxes? Everyone else cheats. My prayers for public officials won't do any good. These and other comments are often heard when the relationship of Christians and government are discussed.

### **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

**Romans 13:1-7** This passage from the “exhortation” portion of Romans is a part of a discussion on the disciple and love.

The outline for this section:

1. Romans 12:1-21 – Love and a life of sacrifice.
2. Romans 13:1-14 – Love and a life of submission.
3. Romans 14:1-15:13 – Love and a life of service.

## **Focusing on the Meaning:**

### **In the second section on love and a life of submission:**

The first part (Romans 13:1-7) discusses loyalty to the state. This section is part of the greater discussion of love and teaches that a Christian is responsible not only to God but to the state because of his love for God.

**Romans. 13:1** Every person, every soul, is to be subject to civil rulers because God put them there. Some commentators would see “governing authorities” as angels and supernatural powers. Paul is not specifying a particular kind of civil government but is advocating order. He is not advocating the divine right of kings or any other special style of government, but advocates only for order and government. Christians are not only part of the heavenly kingdom but are citizens also of an earthly kingdom. The church and state are not identical, but distinct, yet not opposed. The Christian as resident of both has responsibilities to both kingdoms. Submission is to be more than servile. It is to be in an attitude that always makes society a better place to live. Christians are urged by Timothy to pray and intercede for kings and those in authority.

Jesus, when questioned about whether a person should pay taxes to Caesar, gave a reply in Matthew 22:21 that indicates there are responsibilities to the civil government which are different from duties to God and do not necessarily conflict with each other. Being submissive is not a subservient attitude. Paul used subjection in a sense of mutual respect. Christians who are loyal citizens of a country find a place in the whole that is consistent with their devotion to Christ. Because of this, then, they make the state a better place to live.

**Romans 13:2** The Christian who rises up against the government opposes what God has set up. The Christian is not to align himself against the authorities. Rebellion against God-instituted government is to resist God himself. Resisting the government will bring consequences. This judgment comes from the authorities, the civil law, as

mentioned in v. 3. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:13 that believers are to be subject to authorities – kings and those governors who are appointed to uphold the law. He indicates that God has sent authorities to commend the lawful and punish the violators.

**Romans 13:3** The believer who is doing right has nothing to fear from the civil authorities. Only the wrong doers need to be concerned. Christians are to give loyalty to earthly rulers only when they seek good conduct and punish the evildoers. The ruler Paul speaks of is the one who is promoting the good against the bad. Paul does not necessarily agree with all that kings and others in charge do; but speaks generally of the ideal for rulers. This is not an endorsement for any government who seeks the subjection of its citizens and not the keeping of order for the good of all. Some authorities must be opposed. Paul continues in this verse to say that citizens who do what is right will be praised.

**Romans 13:4** Civil government leaders are ministers of God to do good to the citizens. Those who do wrong should be afraid of civil leaders because of their “swords.” The word used to describe good government leaders, “God’s servants” is the same word that describes a Christian. The sword is a symbol of authority, just as a policeman carries a pistol. He is acting as God’s agent to bring punishment on the guilty. Individuals do not have the power or right to inflict punishment in society; this is the power of the government.

**Romans 13:5** Obedience to the government is necessary, not only to avoid penalty, but because of one’s conscience with God. Conscience is the faculty of having an inner knowledge of right and wrong. Conscience is incomplete and can be imperfect, and must be weighed against God’s teaching in the Bible. The “big people” in a child’s life heavily influence conscience. The adult Christian must continue to “grow” his conscience by examining the word of God.

A Christian is never free to take part in wrong, even on the command of civil government. If civil law commands us to violate God’s law, then we must obey God. If called on to obey an unjust command, the question arises: should the Christian actively rebel and pay the price of disobedience? This must be decided by judgment and conscience. Sometimes, Christians want to disobey a law they consider unjust, but are reluctant to pay the penalty of that disobedience. Peter and John in Acts 4:18-20 and 5:29 indicate that they must obey God rather than men when commanded not to speak anymore about Jesus. These disciples ultimately paid a high price for their obedience.

**Romans 13:6** The payment of taxes is an acknowledgement of authority over us. The term “God’s servants” is used for the civil authorities. The term is often used for military servants, servants of the king, and temple servants. When Paul wrote this letter the Roman government collected taxes paid by a captive nation. There were other taxes: taxes on land and income; a poll tax on every Jew age twenty and older; local taxes for use of roads, bridges, etc.



**Romans 13:7** Debts are to be paid. Christians are not to avoid paying what is owed to someone else. Included in this debt are taxes required by the government. Not only are financial debts to be paid, but also those imposed by the civil authorities. We are to be as scrupulous in paying taxes as in paying debts to individuals. “Tribute and revenue” seek to differentiate between taxes on people and/or land compared to customs on merchandise. Not only the physical payment of taxes is commanded but the attitude of the heart and mind is to be respectful and honouring of authorities.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

The governments that control the region where you live may or may not be sympathetic with your religious beliefs or practice. Discuss with your group the fact that the Roman government and the Jewish government of Paul’s day were opposed and even hostile toward Christians, their worship of Jesus as Lord and God—and their insistence on sharing their beliefs with others. Encourage the participants to bear that constantly in mind as they study Paul’s teachings regarding relationships of Christians with governments.

Paul admonishes Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:1 that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and those in authority. The desired result of this behaviour is that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness. Soon after this letter to the Romans was written both Paul and Peter were executed by the power of the state. Respect for the state continued in Christian writing and behaviour. These early Christians said in essence, ***“Jesus is Lord and he alone we worship. But in other matters, as long as you do not demand that we violate our God-given consciences, we gladly serve the state—recognizing your rulers and praying for you in ministry to the country.”***

### **For Personal Reflection:**

1. **What have I learned from this study?**
2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**
3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***Relate as Christians to Government***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

Romans 13:1-7

#### **Background Text**

Romans 13:1-7

#### **Main Idea**

Christians are to submit themselves to human government as it fulfills its God-given role.

#### **Question to Explore**

What is the proper relationship between church and state and between Christians and their government?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help participants summarize the teachings about the proper relationship between church and state and between Christians and their government.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Begin with this story: Recently a prominent individual in the USA state of New York sought to avoid paying the state sales tax. Paintings purchased in New York were delivered to his residence in New York. Fake shipments were sent to an address in another state to offer proof that the paintings were shipped out of state and therefore that it was not necessary to pay the sales tax.

#### **Guide the Study:**

Begin: Governments today have different views of religious practice in their lands. In some countries there are regulations about what groups can meet to worship and teach. In some countries there are rules about what beliefs about God must be held by the citizens who live there. In some countries there are regulations about what groups can broadcast their religious views. Some countries allow one group to persecute other religious groups. Detention, interrogation, fines, jailing, beatings, torture, enslavement and murder are used in some countries to enforce certain religious conformity.

Ask the group these questions: (Have a youth, young adult, and senior each answer one of the questions, if appropriate in your congregation).

What is the purpose of government?

What responsibilities does a Christian have in relationship to government?

Should the Christian be involved with government?

Continue: Now let's ask ourselves an important and basic question: Where does government get its authority?

State: Let's read Romans 13:1-7 to discover the source of human government.

Have someone read the passage.

Say. Reread the verses silently to yourselves. Underline the phrases relating to the government's source of power.

Give members time to reread the passage and mark the phrases relating to the government's source of power. When they are ready, review and point out they could have marked these passages:

Romans 13:1 "that which God has established" and "The authorities that exist have been established by God."

Romans 13:4 "he is God's servant"

Romans 13:6 "authorities are God's servants,"

Read to the group: These passages indicate that governments have their power because God gives it to them. And, as we are studying these verses, please remember that Paul was not writing about governments that were friendly to Christians in his lifetime. He wrote these teachings to believers in Rome who were under the authority of a government hostile to followers of "The Way" as Christians were called. Within a short time, that government would behead Paul because of his faith. Eventually, thousands of Christians would be murdered by the Roman government. Others of

Paul's fellow believers felt the hatred of the Jewish government in Jerusalem and elsewhere. Yet the teachings proclaimed by Paul in these verses remain true.

Discuss briefly the fact that governments are fixed by God. Ask: What must the Christian do in regard to the government as indicated in v. 1? (Romans 13:1 Everyone must submit himself.)

Seek opinions on this: What does it mean to submit ourselves to the government?

Explain: Verse 2 tells us that a person who rebels against the government is rebelling against an institution that God began.

Question the group: What happens when a person rebels against his government? (He who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted.)

Ask: What are the consequences of rebelling against the government? (V. 2 Those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.)

Search out an answer to: Who should be afraid of government as indicated in v. 3? (Those who do wrong.)

Now ask: How can citizens not be afraid of those in governmental authority? (V. 3 indicates that by doing right a person has nothing to fear. If speed limits are not exceeded, signal lights are observed, etc. then a person in most places has nothing to fear from a patrolman.)

Call for an answer to: What is the purpose of government as shown in v. 4? (To do us good and to punish the wrongdoer.)

Add: Why should Christians submit to the authorities? Search v. 5. (To avoid possible punishment and to avoid having a troubled conscience.)

Seek a response to this: Why should a person pay taxes as stated in v. 6? (To provide for the government to do its work.)

Use the “**Teacher Preparation**” commentary to lecture briefly on paying what is owed: taxes, revenue, respect, and honour.

Say: Government and Christianity have had various kinds of relationships through the years. In the ideal situation government would do its work and the Christian church would do its work. The church should not seek to impose or compel others to comply with its beliefs. It should not seek to control people in the way they believe or act. The government should not seek to make people believe or not believe a certain way about God. It should not endorse a certain belief system. It should not favor one religious belief system over another through power or finances. It should give its citizens the

freedom to accept or reject whatever faith they want without fear of retribution by the government or by another religious group.

Continue: In the 1600's, Roger Williams, as a court clerk in England, attended many legal court trials. He became troubled as he saw men, women, and children punished because they would not believe a particular religious dogma. His later protests against established church beliefs as sponsored by the king led him from England to Boston, in the Colony of Massachusetts in North America. This British colony was a combination of democracy and theocracy. Civil law and religious law were intermingled. Williams preached for the right of individuals to determine for themselves, without coercion from the state or other religions, what they would believe. He was brought to trial for what some thought was sedition against the state. He was banished from the colony. Later, his efforts in the new colony of Rhode Island led to it receive a founding charter from the British throne that authorized it's existence as a British colony and right to make laws for its citizens. In time, Williams guided Rhode Island to adopt the "Rhode Island Compact" which provided a government that had authority only in civil things. This signaled an early step toward the separation of church and state in America that would become law some 150 years later.

Not far to the south of Rhode Island, in the British Colony of Virginia, the established church attempted to exterminate troublesome religious dissenters. As a result, ministers of non-conforming groups were arrested and jailed on hundreds of occasions.

Church responsibilities and government responsibilities sometimes get intermixed. Citizens are to obey government laws. If these laws conflict with God's law the Christian must be loyal to the Lordship of Jesus.

## **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Say: I'm going to read some phrases. If you agree with a phrase raise your hand. If you do not agree keep your hand down. I will ask for one volunteer to say why they answered as they did before we go to the next one.

Read these one at a time, get response, and discuss **very briefly**. Then go to the next. If there is disagreement seek to hear views of both opinions. **Watch your time! This could go on too long. (Even one minute each = 12 minutes).** You may need to select only two or three that would be relevant to your group.

- Serve on a jury.
- Pay taxes to support a certain denomination.
- Disobey unpopular laws.

- Respect government officials.
- Worship only in state authorized churches.
- Go over the speed limit because the highway is straight and no other cars are on the road.
- Close your store on Sunday because city laws command it.
- Gossip about the misdeeds of governmental leaders.
- Put more people in a church auditorium than city fire codes permit.
- Do work on a church building without a city permit.
- Refuse to vote on election day because Christians should not be involved in the world.
- Pray only for the civic leaders with whom you agree.

Pray: **“God help us to be good citizens of your kingdom. Help us to believe and behave as your Word commands us. God help us to also be good citizens of our country.”**

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***Relate as Christians to Government*** **Romans 13:1-7**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **Who's in Charge?**

Call out all the sources of authority to which youth are subject as one of you lists them on a whiteboard. (Examples: teachers, police, traffic signals, parents, the Word of God).

Discuss your attitudes to each of these. Which are easy to obey? Which are difficult?

Why is it sometimes difficult to respect authority? (lack of integrity by those with power, unfair practices, special situations)

What does God expect? (Rom. 13:5)

One of you lead in a prayer of submission to God and for those who are in positions of authority.

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Relate as Christians to Government***  
**Romans 13:1-7****Beginning the Service:**

Sing several songs that exalt Jesus Christ above all creation.  
See suggestions given in Music Sources.

**Offering:**

Take up the offering in the manner which best suits your home church situation.

**Praying for the World:**

**Leader:** Explain to the group that one of the writers of today's session shares the following story: "My sister is a missionary serving in Eastern Europe. Years ago she would smuggle Bibles into Romanian refugee camps. Had she been caught, her life would have been in danger. She disregarded the authorities of this world in order to obey God's imperative of sharing the gospel with all people. Do you agree with her actions? Some Christians do. Others do not agree that this is a good way to ensure the sharing of the Gospel. However, she and all missionaries in dangerous places and situations need our constant, continual prayer."

**Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.**

***The Christian in a Secular Society***  
**Romans 13:1-7****Introduction:**

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An old hymn says ***“This world is not my home, I’m just a passing thru, My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue; The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door, and I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.”***<sup>(1)</sup>

In Matthew 6 our Lord told us to ***“Stop laying up treasures upon earth...but begin laying up treasures for yourselves in heaven.”*** (Matthew 6:19-20) (Personal translation). But in Mark 12:17 Jesus tells us to, ***“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”*** How are we supposed to live since we are in this world but not of this world?

We are Christians in a secular society. Paul himself was a former government worker. He knew we must learn to live as good citizens of both worlds. How do we look forward to heaven and live responsibly in our earthly world?

## **I. The Christian in a secular society recognizes his place in the world.**

We live with opportunity all around us. Jesus said we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. We’re God’s presence to each person with whom we come in contact. People are to see our good works and glorify our God who is in heaven. God expects us to be a part of our society. Abraham had to live in his world on his way to heaven. Moses was very privileged by his place in his world until he broke the law. He had to find an entirely new society. Some early Christians wanted to ignore the world so they moved into monasteries to close the world out.

We are to be involved in our world. J. B. Weatherspoon writes, “To withdraw from the world is to surrender to the world.... We are a part of the world, and because we are Christians doesn’t mean that we leave politics to the non-Christian.... It means rather that life must be Christian.... Indeed, we have more responsibility than those who are not Christian. Far from withdrawing, ours is the greater task; for we go into the world, and we live in our homes and communities, in our states and nation, as Christians.”<sup>(2)</sup> We are to be a positive influence on our society.

## **II. The Christian in a secular society must also recognize government’s place in the world.**

God ordains government. The governing authorities receive their authority from God alone. He established them. He gave government the tasks of protecting the righteous, punishing evildoers, and administering state affairs. Government must produce a stable society in which its citizens live. As Christians we have a dual responsibility along with our dual citizenship; to be a good citizen actively taking part in both commonwealths.

Paul was able to travel over the Roman Empire because of his citizenship. He could spread the Gospel because of the freedom afforded him. We must remember, no matter where we live, we must be good citizens making the most of each opportunity given us to share the truth of Jesus Christ.

### III. The Christian in a secular society also recognizes the power of Christian influences on government.

The Christian is to be obedient and give full honour to the authorities. We must submit because of the threat of punishment (v. 4) and because of conscience (v. 5). It is the right thing to do. The Christian will also exert his influence on government workers by willingly submitting to the authority, doing what is right and giving respect to those in power. Mark Hatfield writes, **“For the Christian man to reason that God does not want him in politics because there are too many evil men in government is as insensitive as for a Christian doctor to turn his back on an epidemic because there are too many germs there. For the Christian to say that he will not enter politics because he might lose his faith is the same as for the physician to say that he will not heal men because he might catch their diseases.”**<sup>(3)</sup>

While we are here, we are to influence our government.

#### Call to Commitment:

We have a place in both kingdoms. God gave us our government to provide a stable atmosphere for the spread of the Gospel. We are to be a positive influence for our Lord in our world. Paul concludes by saying, ***“This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour*** (vv. 6-7).” Let us be the best we can be in both kingdoms because it is God’s will.

Ask a person (or three people) to briefly pray for those:

- who serve God in government.
- who share their faith where there is hostility to the gospel.
- who are responsible to make and enforce laws.

#### Concluding the Service:

Dismiss the congregation by offering the following Celtic Christian prayer:

#### A Celtic Breastplate Prayer

I bind myself today  
The power of God to hold and lead  
His eye to watch, His might to stay  
His ear to hearken to my need  
The wisdom of my God to teach  
His hand to guide

His shield to ward  
The word of God to give me speech  
His Heavenly Host to be my guard

The early Celtic church had many 'breastplate prayers', or 'lorica', which declared the surrounding and encompassing of God. Such prayers were not to make God come—He is already there—but to open our eyes to the reality. In breastplate prayers, the person who prays seeks to become aware of what is already a reality.

The above prayer is from the 4th century and is attributed to St. Patrick.

<sup>(1)</sup> J.R. Baxter, Jr., copyright 1946 by Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Co. 'Sentimental Songs'. Renewal 1974.

<sup>(2)</sup> *The Christian in Society*. Nashville: Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 1958, p. 23.

<sup>(3)</sup> *Conflict and Conscience*. Waco: Word Books, Publishers, 1971, p. 158.

## **A Celtic Breastplate Prayer**

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