



How do I honor my government when I disagree with what they're doing? Posted by Zach Zender

George Tiller was a physician from Wichita, Kansas. He was the medical director of a clinic in Wichita, Women's Health Care Services, one of only three nationwide which provided abortions after the 21st week of pregnancy (known as late-term abortion).

Pro-life group Operation Rescue kept a daily vigil outside Tiller's clinic for many years: first the national group, then later a branch that moved from California to Kansas specifically to focus on Tiller. On August 19, 1993, outside of the Wichita clinic, Tiller was shot in both arms by Shelley Shannon, who received an 11-year prison sentence for the crime of attempted murder. On May 31, 2009, Tiller was shot through the eye and killed, by anti-abortion activist Scott Roeder, as Tiller served as an usher during the Sunday morning service at his ELCA church in Wichita. Jurors deliberated just 40 minutes before convicting Scott Roeder of murder on January 29th, 2010.

The killing brought about different reactions and responses. Tiller's congregation responded by saying this: 'Our congregation strives to be a safe place for all people. We deplore the violence that took place within the walls of our church. Further, we reject any notion that violence against another human being is an acceptable way to resolve differences over any issue. We must always strive to engage in peaceful discussion. Our faith calls us to this. Our humanity demands it.'

Tiller's killing was largely condemned by groups and individuals on both sides of the abortion issue. President Barack Obama said he was 'shocked and outraged' by the murder, and David N. O'Steen, director of the National Right to Life Committee, said the group 'unequivocally condemns any such acts of violence regardless of motivation.' A few others were more confrontational: anti-abortion activist Randall Terry described Tiller as a mass murderer and said of other abortionists, 'We must continue to expose them in our communities and peacefully protest them at their offices and homes, and yes, even their churches.' Southern Baptist minister and radio host Wiley Drake went so far as to say, "I am glad that he is dead."

Scott Roeder took the stand in his own defense on January 28. At the outset, he admitted to killing Tiller, defending his act as an attempt to save unborn children and giving his views on abortion. On January 29, 2010, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on all three charges after less than 40 minutes of deliberation.

After the shooting, Tiller's colleague, Leroy Carhart of Nebraska, stated that Tiller's clinic, Women's Health Care Services, would reopen after being closed for one week to mourn his death. The following week, Tiller's family announced that the clinic will be closed permanently."

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How do you feel about this story? Does it enrage you that a man would kill another man at their church just because of different beliefs? Or, if you are opposed to abortion, are you secretly kind of happy about how this all played out because now this man who performed these abortions is not able to do this anymore and his clinic is shut down as well?

**Which brings us to our question: how do we honor our government when we disagree with what they are doing?**

Let's switch gears for a minute and talk about coins. Jesus deals with a question about government by using a coin. Mark 12:13-17 (NIV) says

"And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not? But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." 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."

So here come the Herodians and the Pharisees to stump Jesus. During the time that Jesus lived, many Jews were in opposition to the Roman authorities and government. The Jewish people wanted to establish a Jewish state. A Gentile ruler over Israel was insulting to them. Caesar was the Roman emperor at the time. The Pharisees were asking if they should support a government that was often at odds with their morals and religion.

If Jesus answered that they shouldn't pay taxes to the Roman emperor, then he would have angered the Roman authorities and the government. If he answers that they should pay taxes to Caesar then he angers the Jewish people. Many of the Jews at this time also thought that Jesus came to restore Israel as a state and that one of his main purposes was to overthrow the Roman government. This was the trap they were trying to get him into. He sees right through their intentions and asks them to bring him a coin. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." He answers their question in a way they understood and they marveled at his words.

Our interpretation of this event gives us a start in answering our question. This story has been used by many to support the idea of separating church and state, because clearly in the text, Jesus makes a distinction between secular and religious authority. However, Jesus gives no indication as to how a person can tell the difference between things that are Caesar's and things that are God's. Not everything comes with a "Heads or Tails" or a "Black and White" or a "Church and State" inscription on it. Sometimes they blend together and sometimes they are very separate.

Jesus is essentially telling the Jewish people that it is not a violation of the authority of God, if in respect to government, the Jews obey the Romans. So, similarly, in our case today, even if you believe our government and our nation are corrupt, it is not a violation of the authority of God, if in respect to outward government you obey the American government. There is a certain order that God has established and instituted in this world: children are submissive to their parents, employees to their employers, and citizens to their government. This is what it means that God has instituted governing authorities in this world. He institutes government for our benefit.

So, it's okay to honor the government by respecting the laws and commands which they have set forth that are in accordance with God's Word. Just because they may be off in certain areas don't mean we need to protest the whole entity

of our government. Rather, we support and encourage our government when things are done right. But is there a time when do we not support it? Yes, there is. When the government or the leader claims that they are God or when the government institutes things that are contrary to God's Word we have a job, not just as Christians, but as American citizens to fight against these laws and commands.

But here's the key. We do things with peace and not with evil. In Romans 12, Paul calls us to never repay evil for evil. This is where Scott Roeder failed. He was correct in opposing abortion and wanting to end it, however, he broke not only the law of this country, but also the Law of God. If we want to change hearts, minds and laws, we do so peacefully.

That is exactly what Jesus did. He changed people's beliefs. He changed their way of thinking. But he always did it as a servant, peacefully, with humility. He stood up for what was right, even when the government sentenced him to death, and he died. His solution for the entire human race was to be a servant and live in humility. Not to take up matters with the sword, but rather to take up matters with love and peace. The same love and peace that he offers to us. The same love and peace that he calls us to live by today.

**So how do we honor our government when we disagree with what they are doing?** By living like Christ. By speaking the truth in love, not in violence...by living a life of peace. We stand up for what we believe in. We try to change things. We give ourselves to the cause of Christ and His name even if it has a cost to us. But we always do it in peace!

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