

2006-07 BSP#3 Group Time Discussion

(A) Questions on the Text (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

1. Read 5:34-39 and footnote #6 in the Chinese bible. Who is Gamaliel? Why was he remembered favorably in Christian antiquity?
2. Compare Acts 7:56, 59, 60 with Luke 22:69, 23:46, 23:34 respectively. Illustrate the commonalities between the trials and deaths of Stephen and Jesus.

(B) Session Review (Suggested time: 20 minutes)

Review today's session outline for the Navigator's Time, particularly the summary (item G). What is the most important point you learned from today's session? Why? Are there any issues discussed in today's Navigator's Time that you don't understand? Discuss them with your group members and see if they can help you. If satisfactory answers are not readily available, put the issues or questions on paper. Either bring them up during Q&A or submit them to the navigator for post-session response.

(C) Optional Application Question (Suggestion: Do this question only if you have at least 10 minutes left.)

“We must obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29) – This is the foundational premise of civil disobedience. It insists that believers cannot submit to human authorities, institutions, and laws that contradict the laws of God. Part of the Christian mission is to bring civil legislation in line with divine law and when this proves unsuccessful, to make a courageous stand in favor of the gospel. Assume that you are a Chinese citizen living in Mainland China and are asked by government authority to abort your second child. How would you react to this government order? See if the following CCC teaching is useful for your decision-making:

2242 The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. *Refusing obedience* to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." "We must obey God rather than men":

When citizens are under the oppression of a public authority which oversteps its competence, they should still not refuse to give or to do what is objectively demanded of them by the common good; but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority within the limits of the natural law and the Law of the Gospel.

2242 若執政當局發出的指令違反道德秩序的要求、人的基本權利、或福音的教導，公民依照良心有責任不予順從。若執政當局的要求違反正直的良心，則在服務天主與服務政治團體的區分上，得到拒絕服從政府的理由。「凱撒的，就應歸還凱撒；天主的就應歸還天主」(瑪 22:21)。「聽天主的命應勝過聽人的命」(宗 5:29)。假如政府擅自越權、欺壓國民，國民不應拒絕實踐為促進公益的客觀要求。然而，國民有權維護自身及其他國民的權利，免受政府濫用權力的危害。不過應尊重自然律及福音原則所畫定的界限。