

Brief Questions Civil Disobedience

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- **What is the conclusion of the motto “That government is best which governs least”?**

Ans:

The logical conclusion is “That government is best which governs not at all.”

- **What was happening with the American government in Thoreau’s time?**

Ans:

It was losing integrity and moral strength day by day.

- **Why are the majority allowed to rule?**

Ans:

Not because they are right or just, but because they are physically the strongest.

- **What kind of worth do men who serve the state have?**

Ans:

Their worth is like that of dogs and horses—they obey without conscience.

- **How do heroes and reformers serve the state?**

Ans:

They serve it with their conscience, not merely with their bodies.

- **What do all men recognize?**

Ans:

All men recognize the right of revolution.

- **What should a man do regarding a wrong?**

Ans:

He should not support or take part in it; he must wash his hands of it.

- **How do feelings about sin progress?**

Ans:

First comes shame, then indifference, and finally sin becomes accepted as normal.

- **What is one sign of an unjust law?**

Ans:

The punishment for breaking it is far harsher than the offence itself.

- **What should be considered as bloodshed?**

Ans:

The wounding of one's conscience should be regarded as bloodshed.

- **When does a man meet an everlasting death?**

Ans:

When his conscience is wounded and his true self dies.

- **To whom does a small tax appear large?**

Ans:

To poor labourers who work hard for little, any tax feels excessive.

- **What did Confucius say about government?**

Ans:

If a state follows reason, poverty is shameful; if not, wealth is shameful.

- **How many years did Thoreau refuse to pay poll-tax?**

Ans:

He refused to pay it for six years.

- **How did Thoreau regard his imprisonment?**

Ans:

He found it foolish that the state tried to imprison his body, not his mind.

- **Why was Thoreau imprisoned for one night?**

Ans:

Because he refused to pay the poll-tax.

- **How was the night in prison for him?**

Ans

: It was an interesting and reflective experience.

- **Who introduced Thoreau's roommate in jail?**

Ans:

The jailer introduced his roommate to him.

- **What did the roommate do after the door was locked?**

Ans: He showed Thoreau where to hang his hat and how he lived there.

- **Why was the roommate imprisoned?**

Ans:

He was accused of burning a barn.

- **What is Thoreau's opinion about taxpayers?**

Ans:

They indirectly support injustice more than the government itself.

- **Why does Thoreau mention Orpheus?**

Ans:

To show that real change, like Orpheus's music, takes time and patience.

- **What did Thoreau say about Daniel Webster?**

Ans:

Webster was wise for lawmakers but never thought about true moral reform.

- **Who stand by the Bible and the Constitution?**

Ans:

Those who don't seek the real cause of evil in society.

- **What does Thoreau say about legislators of genius?**

Ans:

He says no true genius in legislation has yet appeared in America.

- **What kind of state does Thoreau imagine?**

Ans:

A just state that respects every individual and allows moral independence.

- **How do reformers serve the state?**

Ans:

They challenge existing laws to improve society.

- **How do most men serve the state?**

Ans:

Like machines, without moral judgment.

- **Who serve the state with conscience?**

Ans:

Only a few—heroes, martyrs, patriots, and reformers.

- **Who are the enemies of the state, according to Thoreau?**

Ans:

Heroes and reformers who oppose injustice.

- **What results from blind respect for law?**

Ans:

Armies of soldiers who follow orders without thinking.

- **When do men have the right to revolution?**

Ans:

When the government becomes tyrannical or unjust.

- **What action is truly revolutionary?**

Ans:

Acting from moral principle rather than blind obedience.

- **What is Thoreau's opinion of voting?**

Ans:

He calls it a kind of gambling with moral issues.

- **When is a minority powerless?**

Ans:

When it blindly follows the majority.

- **Why did Thoreau refuse to pay the tax bill?**

Ans:

To withdraw his support from an unjust government.

- **Why was Thoreau jailed for one night?**

Ans:

For not paying the poll-tax.

- **What was the topic of Thoreau's lecture at Concord Lyceum?**

Ans:

"On the Relation of the Individual to the State."

- **What is Thoreau's dream of an ideal state?**

Ans:

A state that treats every person with justice and respects personal freedom.