

September 27, 2021

1. COVID-19 Vaccinations and Respect for Superior Authorities: Out of concern and love, we are sharing the following important information. (1 Cor. 12:25) As a result of the ongoing pandemic, secular authorities in an increasing number of lands are mandating or strongly encouraging that their citizens be vaccinated for COVID-19. The recent Governing Body updates have helped Jehovah's people understand the thinking of the faithful slave on this matter.
2. Branch offices have reported that some elders have voiced strong personal opinions against COVID-19 vaccination. Why is this of concern? Romans 13:1 says that "the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God." Also, the study note on Romans 13:5 says: "A Christian submits to human governments when a command does not contradict God's laws." Romans 13:2 states: "Whoever opposes the [secular] authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God." Thus, elders should be careful not to voice personal opinions that contradict direction from the superior authorities. If an elder has been doing so, now is the time to stop. (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:4-7) Otherwise, he could become guilty of causing divisions in the congregation.
3. At Romans 16:17, elders are admonished: "Keep your eye on those who create divisions and causes for stumbling contrary to the teaching that you have learned, and avoid them." Thus, elders have a Scriptural responsibility to counsel any, including fellow elders, who cause divisions in the congregation. (Gal. 6:1) Circuit overseers will closely monitor the situation. We commend you brothers for "holding firmly" to God's Word, promoting unity in the congregation, and taking the lead in showing "honor" to the secular authorities. (Titus 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:13-17) We thank you for your cooperation in this matter, and we take this opportunity to send our warm Christian love.