

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #4

Heb. 13:7,17 / Eph. 5:22-24, 6:1-8 / Rom. 13:1-7

HAVING RIGHT ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES TO AUTHORITY

Our proper attitudes and responses to those authorities that God has placed in our lives command a prominent place in the teaching epistles of the New Testament. We naturally want to be our own authority, but God is reestablishing His rule in our souls which began when we accepted Christ as our Savior. The great challenge of the Christian life, which we must meet if we are to be useful and fruitful to our Savior, is to also make Him our Lord.

Our Lord has placed each of us under one or more of five human authorities (parents, husbands, church elders, national governments, and masters) and given us clear and extensive instructions on how we are to view and respond to them. These authorities operate under His sovereign and providential rule and overrule which we must accept by faith and respond to as He has directed. There are limits to their authority which He also reveals.

These limits are important, but they must be viewed in light of the truths of this study unit or they become counterproductive. So, before looking at these five authorities and the commands we are given regarding them, let us note the consequences God has warned us will occur if we are weak and immature in this area of serving Him.

Do you struggle with the authorities God has placed in your life? Marriages struggle and are torn apart because men won't lead and women won't follow. Families do not flourish because children do not honor parents and fathers provoke their children. Churches are not built up, but torn down, because leaders are not wise and diligent and members do not honor them and heed their teaching and leadership.

This study deals with our attitudes and responses when UNDER authority. A discussion of the principles of BEING IN AUTHORITY as a Christian would be valuable in conjunction with this.

The Consequences Of Poor Attitudes And Responses To The Leaders And Authorities God Has Placed In Your Life

1. You miss God's calling and will for your life.

When the Father sent the Son to become a man and live a sinless life that qualified Him to die the substitutionary death that He did, He placed Him under the authority of human parents and required Him to honor and submit to them, even though they were pretty clueless about His person and work. Notice His response to them, which kept Him in the center of the Father's will.

“And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him. And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You. And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house? And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

*And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and **He continued in subjection to them**; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, **and in favor with God and men.**”*

— Luke 2:41-52

2. It will be “unprofitable” for you.

*“Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be **unprofitable** for you”.*

— Heb. 13:17

God chooses our leaders and authorities for us, our parents, our national leadership, our church leaders. (see 1 Cor. 12:18) To say, “I have my own counselors, I choose my own leaders”, is to be quite at odds with God's Word, and quite arrogantly proud.

3. You open yourself up to deception and further sin.

God warns us that, “*Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and divination*” (1 Sam. 15:23). Indulging in witchcraft exposes you to the realm and power of Satan and his deceptions. So does rejecting the counsel and leading of your leaders in their sphere of God given authority in your life.

*“You younger men, likewise, **be subject to your elders**; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.*

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” — 1 Pet. 5:5-8

Who Are These God-Ordained Human Authorities And What Are God’s Instructions To Us Regarding Our Attitudes And Responses To Them As We Serve Him?

The diagram below summarizes the answer to these questions. We shall briefly define the five words that are used to describe our attitudes and actions, which are used in the passages identified for each and associated with the authority in our life.

The first word which we translate “be subject to” or “SUBMIT TO” is the Greek word **hupotasso**. It is a military term, found as an imperative (i.e. a command) in these New Testament passages, which gives the sense of “place yourself under the command of”. Notice that it is used in regard to slaves as well as **all** of the other authorities.

*“Slaves, **be submissive** to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.”* — 1 Pet. 2:18-19

This does not mean that there are not limits to their authority (see Acts 4 and Peter’s “lines” for this, as well as Daniel 1/3/6), but what a shock this command must have been to Onesimus, the escaped slave of Philemon whom Paul sent back. In this same passage, in 1 Peter, the same word is used by the apostle Paul for wives.

*“**In the same way**, you wives, **be submissive** (hupotasso) to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.”* — 1 Pet. 3:1-2

The second word is **hupakouo** which means literally “to hear under” or “listen to” and is translated “OBEY”. Again it is a command.

*“Children, **obey your parents** in the Lord, for this is right.” — Eph. 6:1*

The third word instructing us as to proper attitudes and responses is “**phobos**”, which means “reverential fear” and is translated as “honor” or “fear” or “respect”. Its primary use is of a right attitude toward God. We are to fear Him, honor Him, and respect Him.

Notice that this word is also used in regard to ALL of the human authorities that God has placed in our lives. We are fearing, and honoring God as we have proper attitudes and responses to these human authorities in our life.

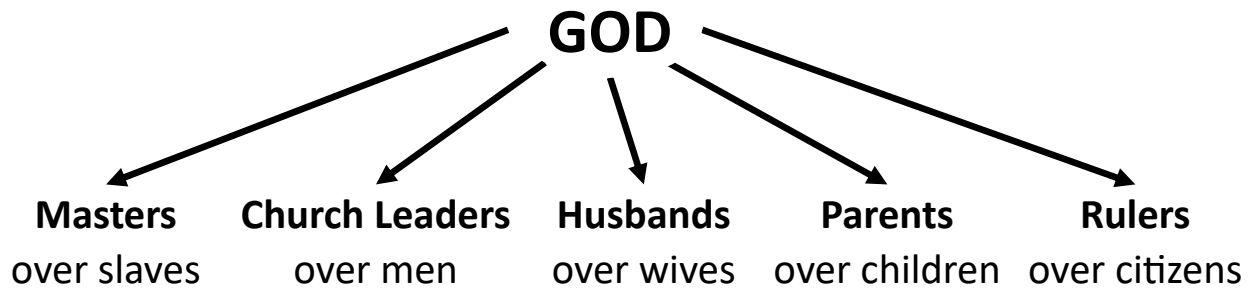
The fourth word is “**peitho**” and is found in God’s instructions to men regarding their attitudes towards the pastors and elders of their church. It means to be open to “let yourself be persuaded by” or “be convinced by” these men as you seek God’s will in a matter. Be open to their thinking and arguments and obey them!

*“**Obey (peitho)** your leaders, and submit (**hupeiko**) to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” — Heb. 13:17*

The fifth and final word is found in the verse above, addressed to men in the church. It is “**hupeiko**”. It is similar to peitho in that it means “give way to their admonition”. They have made an argument to you, they have exhorted, rebuked perhaps, and admonished you in a particular area, so heed what they say is the sense.

Do you have these attitudes and responses toward the authorities that God has placed in your life? What are the evidences that the answer to this question for a person is no?

1. You are your own authority, not always, but when it matters to you.
2. Your attitudes toward one or more of these authorities is dishonoring and disrespectful. You are not seeking but telling. Your authorities are not significantly involved in your life, but generally ignored, especially regarding what matters.
3. You are or have been openly opposed to one of these. Not neutral, but opposed.



**Right Attitudes and Actions Toward our Authorities —
Avoiding Deception and Finding God’s Calling**

	Slaves to Masters	Men to Church Leaders	Wives to Husbands	Children to Parents	Citizens to Rulers
1. SUBMIT TO	1 Pet. 2:18-24	1 Pet. 5:5-11	1 Pet. 3:1-6	Luke 2:52	Rom. 13:1, 5
2. OBEY	Col. 3:22	2 Thess. 3:14	1 Pet. 3:6	Eph. 6:1-3	
3. FEAR/HONOR	Eph. 6:5	2 Thess. 3:4	1 Pet. 3:2	Eph. 6:2	Rom. 13:4, 7
4. BE PERSUADED BY		Heb. 13:17	1 Pet. 3:1		
5. YIELD TO		Heb. 13:17			

UNIT STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study of this principle of living for Christ, read and study the above scriptures and summary and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My Attitudes And Responses To The Authorities God Has Brought And Allowed In My Life

1. Responding to fallible human authorities as God asks is not hard, it is impossible in our own strength. How would you rate the difficulties that you face in this area of life?
Easy right now ____. A constant challenge _____. Very hard _____.
Hard with some, easier with others _____.
2. Concerning your family authorities (parents, husbands), how would you rate your attitudes and responses with these challenges? ___ Excellent ___ Ok ___ Poor ___.
3. Concerning the leaders of your church, do you see and use them to discern God's will in the important decisions you face in life?
No _____. They are not really authorities to me in anything but going to church _____.
Counsel yes, authority no. ____
Yes _____.
4. Concerning governmental laws, rules, prohibitions, and requirements, do you honor and respect them as far as you are able to as a Christian? Yes _____. No _____.
Do you cheat on your taxes? Yes _____. No _____.
5. When I am in the world, as a student or as an employee for example, do I honor those who are the authorities in these venues, being an example to others?
Yes _____.
Not in a purposeful way _____.
No _____.
6. What does the study of this area tell you, as a disciple of Christ, that you need to do to please your Lord and be growing in usefulness to Him as a witness to a world of fallen creatures that are their own authority? _____

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. How does Rom. 8:28 help us in responding with honor and respect to a difficult or even sinning authority?
2. We are instructed to pray for “all who are in authority” over us. What is the reason given for this (1 Tim. 2:1-8) and why would we be told to pray for this?
3. At what point, when our authority is requiring something or leading us somewhere or in some way, are we to say, “I cannot”? Where are these lines to be drawn – and how? (see Exo. 1:15-21, 1 Sam. 14:44-45, 22:17-18, Esther 3:2-4, 4:11, 16, Dan. 1/3/6, Mark 2:23-28, Acts 4).
4. Daniel was both a godly man who held biblical convictions and an example of right attitudes toward his God ordained authorities. (He was a slave) His APPEAL to avoid violating one of his convictions was successful. What are the basic elements of it? Does God want us to make appeals like this?
5. *“Rebellion is as the sin of practicing witchcraft, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.”* This is God’s warning to His people in 1 Samuel 15:23.

Can this statement be applied accurately to our attitudes, not only toward God, but toward the authorities He has placed over us in life? If so, are the effects of exposing ourselves to Satanic influence what He had in mind?

Is avoiding deception to the point of believing that what is false is true, to the point of opposing the truth, what he had in mind? (see 2 Tim. 2:24-26)

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2

Preparation Session #2: Application Project

In preparation for the second study session please consider doing the following:

Choose one of the following three projects to pursue and come prepared to share how it is going.

- Purpose to get in the right place with your God appointed authorities. This may mean clearing up past attitudes and actions by asking forgiveness, or it may mean just asking them for their counsel for the path ahead.
- Purpose to be the authority God wants you to be, as a protector and leader of those he has assigned to you. This may mean clearing up past actions by asking forgiveness, or beginning to act like a leader going forward. Or both.
- If you are struggling with a poor or abusive authority, purpose to get counsel from others as to where and how you are to draw God's lines to say "I cannot", "I will not". Counsel from your Elders is a good place to start. (Heb. 13:17)

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to pursue the application project, can you share with us what you learned and what happened?
2. What are the limits of my authority's authority?
 - What are the limits of parental authority?
 - What are the limits of a husband's authority?
 - What are the limits of church elders' authority?
 - What are the limits of an employer's authority?
 - What are the limits of governmental authority?
3. How do I handle multiple levels of authority – if they disagree?
(government/elders/husband)
4. What are we to do in helping a Christian friend with an "evil" authority that is doing them much harm – such as an abusive husband or a predatory father? What is the church's responsibility in these cases, if any?
5. What are the principles of BEING an authority for God? (a parent, a husband, an elder, the boss in some capacity in the world)

Prayer Together

Examples In Scripture Of Responses To Human Authorities

- Paul/Onesimus/Philemon
- Daniel 1/3/6
- Numbers 12
- Acts 4:18-20

Resources For Further Study

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| • Brave By Faith | Alistair Begg |
| • Live Not By Lies | Rod Dreher |
| • The Church In Babylon | Erwin Lutzer |