

Help!!! I Am Tired of Being Told What To Do!

God's Purposes for Authorities in Our Live

By Michael Boggs

We all deal with authorities. In our families we are either in authority or under our parents authority. In our jobs and even in ministry we are under someone's authority. Understanding how to work under authorities and the consequences, both good and bad, for our actions is critical to our future success.

From the beginnings of mankind, authority has been a major issue. A quick look at the beginning of the book of Genesis shows that God said specifically, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Genesis 1:24, bold added). God gave authority to man to rule. But he also limited man's authority. Mankind, through the temptation of the enemy (the snake/Satan), chose to disobey God's authority, resulting in the original sin. Even the very entry of evil came from a revolt of an angel under God's authority. Lucifer, who became known as the devil (or Satan) made a decision to rebel against authority. Satan attempted to "...raise his throne above the stars of God..." and, in his words, to "...make myself like the most high..." (Isaiah 14:13-14, NASB). **Rebellion against authority through self-seeking actions causes chaos.** The results were tremendous both then and even now in our own lives. Ultimately most problems in our relationship with God or with others come from a misunderstanding or misuse of authority. We can learn from several Biblical examples to see how they dealt with authority and the outcome that was produced.

ENCOUNTER WITH A ROMAN SOLDIER

In Matthew 8:5-13 we read of an encounter that Jesus had with a Roman soldier, a centurion, one who had command over one hundred soldiers. The centurion had a servant who was so ill that he was near death. He asked Jesus to heal his servant and Jesus said that He would go see the servant and heal him. But, the soldier indicated that Jesus did not need to visit the servant, but could simply say the word and the servant would be healed. The centurion gave to Jesus a comparison to explain why he believed Jesus did not need to visit the servant. After the soldier gave his explanation, Jesus said that this centurion had a greater faith than anyone He had met even throughout Israel.

What did the centurion say that caused Jesus to acknowledge his great faith? The centurion explained that since he was personally in authority over soldiers, he could get things accomplished without actually being present by directing those under his authority to take action. But, before explaining his role **in authority**, he stated that he was also a man **under authority**. He was explaining to Jesus that he had authority over soldiers only because he was under the authority of others who gave him his authority. In fact, he received his authority ultimately from Caesar of Rome. The centurion believed that Jesus had the power to heal his servant by the authority that He had received from His Heavenly Father, God Almighty. Jesus recognized the soldier's great faith, pointed it out to the Hebrews that were listening to the conversation, then told the soldier to go home because his servant had been healed.

What is the lesson for us? First, we need to recognize Jesus' authority over all creation and humanity and then to act in a way that displays Him as the ultimate in authority. Secondly, we need to understand God's plan and role for the authorities He has placed in our lives just like the authorities He had placed in the centurion's life. **Authorities are**

individuals or groups of individuals that God has put in a position of responsibility over us. This would include parents, pastors, teachers, work supervisors, policemen, government officials, and for wives their husbands. **God wants us as Christians to honor and to obey those He has placed over us for our protection and for our good.** There are many biblical examples of those who both understood and obeyed this truth, and those who violated the teachings of obedience to authorities.

JESUS IN SUBJECTION AT AGE 12

In every aspect of His life on earth, Jesus was the perfect example of submission to authority. Obviously, He was obedient to His Heavenly Father (Philippians 2:5-8). **Did you know that Christ was also submissive to human authority?** At the age of twelve, his earthly parents took Him with them to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast. Unknown to His parents, He stayed behind when they left for home. When they returned, they found Him in the Temple listening to the teachers and asking them questions. His parents did not understand why He had stayed behind even after He mentioned that He needed to be active in His Heavenly Father's affairs. **We read that Jesus returned home with His earthly parents and remained obedient to them.** Luke 2:52 gives us the result of that obedience when it tells us that Jesus grew physically, mentally, socially and most importantly spiritually.

This act of subjection continued for around eighteen years until Jesus performed His first miracle, at approximately the age of thirty, when He turned the water into wine (John 2:1-10). Even then, Jesus did not begin performing miracles or begin His public ministry until His mother had released Him from under her authority. Note that first, Mary informs Jesus that they have run out of wine. Jesus then replies that His time had not yet come (to begin doing miracles). **Mary**

then tells the servants at the wedding to do whatever Jesus instructs them to do. This was her release of Jesus from under her authority.

Immediately Jesus instructed the servants to fill empty vessels with water and His public ministry began. Now if Jesus, the Son of God, felt it necessary to be under subjection to God-given authorities, should we act any differently?

KING SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

In contrast to Jesus' obedience, we see King Saul's disobedience. In 1 Samuel we read of Israel's desire to have a king. God told Samuel that Israel had not rejected Samuel, but had rejected God Himself. God then tells Samuel to anoint Saul, who He has chosen, to be Israel's king. Saul begins well, as the first recorded words of Saul are ones of humility when he asks why Samuel had approached him since he was from the smallest tribe in Israel and his family was the smallest group in the tribe of Benjamin. But after becoming king and being blessed with success by God, Saul begins to show his own stubbornness. In 1 Samuel 15, God told Saul to conquer the Amalekites and kill every being: including women, children, and animals. This was a judgment from God toward the Amalekites for their wickedness. Saul conquered them, but saved the Amalekite king as well as many healthy sheep, cattle, and lambs. When Samuel saw the saved animals, he confronted Saul. Saul said that he had saved the animals for burnt sacrifices to God. Samuel then made two statements that are true in the eyes of God. Samuel told Saul, face to face, **that it is better to obey than to offer sacrifices and that disobedience is as bad as the sin of sorcery.** (1 Samuel 15:22-23)

The last statement is important for us to seriously reflect upon. **Disobedience and sorcery are the same in God's eyes. Both are exposing oneself to the influence of**

Satan and his wickedness. When we step out from under the protection of an authority in disobedience, we give Satan an inroad to our lives through our disrespect for our authority and our willful disobedience. For example, when someone lives obediently under the civil laws of a government, that person is protected by the law and immune to prosecution. On the other hand, if that person steps out from under the protection of civil law in disobedience and breaks the law, he or she is no longer under the protection of the law and can be prosecuted, convicted, and punished.

LIVING UNDER AUTHORITY

1 Timothy 6:1 instructs servants to **honor and respect their masters**. Titus 3:1 tells believers to **yield to the authority of rulers and government leaders, to obey them, and be ready to do good for them**. Romans 13:1 gives the same instruction and then emphasizes that **God has given government officials the power to rule and that to go against government rulers is to go against what God has commanded**. Remember that this is being taught to Christians who are at the time under Roman rule, which did not like Christians. The Apostle Paul goes on in Romans 13 to explain that these rulers are God's servants to help us. And since these rulers are working for God, we need to pay our taxes to them. Remember, even Jesus paid taxes (Matthew 17:24-27).

These commands do not depend on whether the master or authority is good or bad. **When we obey an authority, we do it as if the authority is God, because the authority is God-appointed**. Consider both Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament. Both were forcibly placed under heathen authorities—Joseph under Potiphar, then a prison warden, and finally under Pharaoh, and Daniel under Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon and then Belshazzar. Even under these terrible conditions, Joseph and Daniel

both obeyed those in authority over them **unless** they were told or asked to do something that they knew was wrong. Then, they were willing to disobey the authority and suffer the consequences. But, **do not assume that if you believe an authority is asking you to do something that is wrong that you can immediately disobey**.

Daniel understood through these circumstances that God had placed him under the authority of a wicked king. The king required Daniel and his friends to eat meat and drink wine. This was a sin to Daniel. So, did he say to the king, "I'm not eating your nasty meat or drinking your filthy wine?" He did not. He set out to find out what the king's purpose was in ordering them to eat meat and drink wine. It was so that they would be well nourished and would have strength to serve the king. Daniel offered a creative alternative to the king by offering to eat vegetables and drink water for ten days (Daniel 1). He then invited the king to evaluate their physical condition. When the king saw that they were healthier than those who ate meat and drank wine, he permitted Daniel and his friends to continue on their diet of vegetables and water.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

How should these biblical truths work out in our lives? First, we need to consider the various authorities that we are naturally under. Whatever country and locality you live in you will have governmental authorities over you. You are obligated to live orderly and obediently under those government authorities.

If you are a youth still living at home, you are under the authority of your parents or guardians. You should obey those authorities.

Circumstances and time will probably lead you out from under some authorities, but most likely into a situation of

other authorities. Many other authorities will come and go in your life because most of those authorities will be by the direction of God as well as of your own choosing. Such authorities will be various employers, pastors and teachers that you will be under. **The question then becomes what circumstances indicate that you should or should not stay under a particular authority.** The source to go to for those answers is God Himself.

Consider the following foundational truths. God does not cause or permit anything to happen in your life that is outside of His love. Remember that, God is love and His love is an action, not an emotion. John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world that He **gave** His only begotten Son. God is constantly directing your life through actions motivated by His love.

Also keep in mind that you and I are on the "string of time" and we are always at one point on that string; the present. Behind us is the past and before us is the future. In contrast to you and I, God is not in any way limited by time. The past, present and future are all the same to Him. He is already in the future waiting for us to arrive. Yet, He is also right by us constantly in the present. So, to be sure you are where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there, trust God's guidance. This guidance can be recognized when God leads you in a given direction through circumstances that are consistent with His word and the convictions and burdens that He has given you.

When God is ready for you to make a change, He will close one door and open another. But, be aware that the open door may not always have a clear view of what lies ahead. Here is where your faith must take hold. In Hebrews 11:8 we read, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where

he went." Notice that (1) he was called, (2) he obeyed, and (3) he did this by faith, because God did not tell him where he was going.

AS A YOUTH LEADER

As a youth leader you may be volunteering your time or you may be receiving payment for your work. The time will come when you will ask yourself the question, "Is it time for me to leave? Is it time for me to go somewhere else or do something else?" Be very careful in answering those questions. Your future depends on the answers.

If you are considering a change, you probably are not happy with your present circumstances or you see a possibility for better circumstances somewhere else. Realize that there are risks with any move, so you need to be cautious.

Friction or disagreements between a youth leader and his or her present authority is often the circumstance that causes a youth leader to consider a change. Here are seven steps that you should take concerning your authority before you decide to step out from under that authority.

1. Evaluate your attitude toward the authority. Do you have an attitude that is not pleasing to God? Do you have an attitude of independence, of ungratefulness, or one that is judgmental toward your authority? **Ask God to help you get your attitude right before you make any decisions.** A wrong attitude will cloud your thinking and can lead you to wrong conclusions.
2. Make sure you have cleared all offenses you may have committed. If anyone can say that you have offended them, then you need to confess your offense and ask the offended to forgive you.
3. Be sure you understand the basic purpose of your authorities directions to you. By knowing basic

motivations of others, you can best judge the merits of their directions. Can you gauge the true motivation of the authority?

4. Consider how you might meet those basic intentions, desires or expectations that the authority is placing on you. Can you be true to your own conscience, burden and purpose in ministry?
5. Offer your suggested alternative for fulfilling the actions. Is there a different option that you can discuss in a mutual compromise with your authority?
6. Display patience by allowing God time to work in the heart of your authority.
7. After using the above actions make a prayerful decision. After you have fulfilled steps 1 and 2, then look for what God is telling you in steps 3 through 6. Having a right heart attitude along with a clear conscience allows you to see more clearly your authority's intentions, and to perceive if you can successfully work under that authority.

If you make a choice to leave, **make every effort to make it a peaceful and a friendly departure.** If God is leading you elsewhere, He desires an orderly separation—a separation that restores and/or continues a God-honoring and fellowship strengthening result. **You have a responsibility to protect the reputation of God and the current authority that you are under.** We have a strong tendency to defend ourselves when accused of wrong actions or attitudes. Trust God to protect your reputation. Be honest about all things. Do not burn bridges over which you may want or need to cross in the future. A continual realization that God is in control and is guiding you even in difficult situations will give you the strength to follow His leading and the confidence to know you are in His will.

Go forward in faith and trust that God is and will guide you in your decisions. Know that He has begun a good work in you and He will be faithful to complete it. Sometimes that sharpening work happens through an abrasive leadership situation. At times our growth occurs in a nurturing relationship with an authority. Always realize that God is the ultimate authority and He knows what we need, when we need it. So in comfort or struggle, He will never leave you or forsake you.

For more resources on youth ministry or to find out about our training systems for youth ministry leadership contact us at:

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experiences as he serves on the GYMN Board of Directors as well.

The following is Mike's testimony regarding his service with GYMN:

"I first met Chris Davis when he spoke about GYMN at the church I attended. I recognized the potential of the ministry of GYMN and from my experience in a Christian school saw the impact that training youth leaders could have in the lives of young people, the lives of their churches and eventually even in the affairs of their countries. I saw that any time or treasures that were invested in GYMN and God's work in this ministry would pay eternal dividends."

Michael Boggs has served in many leadership positions in Christian groups and in business. His years of service and leadership give him the understanding necessary for both sides of authority, those in authority and those under authority. Mike provides his God-given wisdom from his life