

LESSON 3

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

LESSON SUMMARY

As we talk about God's delegated authority, we have to start with this truth: God commands every soul to be subject to the governing authorities (Romans 13:1). What's more, God commands willing submission, not forced. This means that if we resist authority, we are resisting God Himself.

But this is where I hear the same questions every time I teach this: What about leaders who are harsh or evil? Is obedience unconditional?

Believe it or not, God is the one who establishes even the harsh rulers. Consider Pharaoh in Scripture, who ordered the massacre of countless infants and brutally enslaved an entire nation. Even of this Pharaoh, God declares, "I have raised you up" (Exodus 9:16), and we can see He did this for the purpose of redemption: When God mightily delivered Israel from the hands of this evil ruler, His name became known to all the nations.

So, yes, all authority really is from God. However, obedience is not unconditional. We can and should differentiate between obedience and submission. Obedience addresses our actions, but submission addresses our heart and attitude. Over and over in Scripture, we find examples of rulers who commanded God's people to break God's commands. Whenever this happened, it was the duty of the righteous to follow God's commands rather than the ruler's commands. However, even when these people disobeyed their leaders, they did so with respect and a submissive heart.

Here's your bottom line: When a leader requires us to violate the law of Christ (the greatest law), then it is our duty to disobey. The Bible teaches us to have unconditional submission, but not unconditional obedience.

REFLECT

- God is clear about requiring everyone to be subject to governing authorities. Where in your life do you feel this impacts you the most? Why?
- How does it change the way you think of evil leaders when you hear how God established Pharaoh for His purposes?
- How would you explain the difference between obedience and submission in your own words?
- What stood out to you from my story about not feeling fed at my church? Why do you think that stood out to you?
- How do you feel knowing that God rewards and saves those who, when necessary, disobey ungodly leaders, yet keep a submissive attitude?

SCRIPTURES & PRAYER

- Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (Romans 13:1-2)
- "But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that my name may be declared in all the earth." (Exodus 9:16)
- Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)

ADDITIONAL READING:

- Romans 9:17
- Genesis 15:13
- Genesis 45:5-8
- Psalm 105:17-18
- Joshua 2:8-11
- 1 Samuel 4:7-8
- Isaiah 1:19
- Jeremiah 25:9, 27:5-7
- Daniel 3:17-18
- 1 Peter 3:1-2
- Exodus 1:17-20
- Acts 4:33
- Acts 23:5

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, I admit that it's scary to me that You command me to submit to the leaders in my life, even the ones who are harsh or evil. Yet I trust You to work good in every situation I face. Thank You that ultimately it's You I'm submitting to, and no matter who my earthly leader is, I have Your promise to protect me, provide for me, and give me peace.*

DECLARATIONS

- God is love, and I cannot stop God from loving me. His love is invincible and immovable.
- I am able to receive God's love deeply, powerfully, and intimately and because of that, I can love others deeply, powerfully, and intimately.
- God works in and through me to build up what He loves and remove what He hates both in my life and in the lives of others.

TAKE ACTION

Choose one leader from each of the four areas of authority—civil, family, social, and church. Find an address and send them some sort of letter, card, or note to thank them for what they do.

LIVING UNDER COVER

- God delegates His authority in four divisions of earthly leadership—civil, family, social, and church. No person rises into legitimate authority unless God places them in that position, even the men and women who use their position in ungodly ways.
- God commands all people to be subject to the authorities He establishes. Resisting them is equal to resisting Him.
- Obedience and submission are not the same. Obedience addresses our actions, but submission addresses our attitude. There are times when we must disobey, but we should do so with a submissive attitude.