

LESSON 4

CIVIL, SOCIAL, AND FAMILY LEADERSHIP

LESSON SUMMARY

Christians know God is the ultimate authority over all things, but many have questions when it comes to God's delegated authorities in the civil, social, and family realms of society. If we are going to learn how to live under God's cover, we need to see what Scripture says about living under these authorities.

First, God tells us that all civil authorities are His servants. That means if you treat an authority as common, you are showing that you do not honor or respect him or her, and you therefore do not honor or respect God. Remember, when Peter wrote that believers must honor the king, he was talking about a king who murdered Christians. In America, we say you have to earn respect, but the fear of God sees God's authority on a person and respects them whether they earn it or not. That's a high standard of respect.

But what about social leaders, like employers, managers, or teachers? Scripture tells us that we must serve them as we serve the Lord. Our witness to them matters, and we witness by how we work faithfully.

All this applies within our homes as well. Husbands must love their wives as Christ loves the church. Wives should submit to their own husbands (not obey, but submit). Children must honor their father and mother.

I think what we've done is look to our society and ask it to tell us what is good or okay, instead of looking to God's Word to see how we should live.

God's standard might seem high, but following it is His pathway to promised blessing.

REFLECT

- God says all authorities are His servants. Why do you feel this is important for us to know?
- If we don't understand authority, we are missing an essential part of who God is. Why is it dangerous for us, then, to not understand authority?
- The fear of God means giving respect to authorities before it is earned. How does this look different from the way we see the world behave?
- There are two ministries always at work—the ministry of accusation and the ministry of intercession. What can you do to make sure you add to the ministry of intercession instead of fueling the ministry of accusation?
- How did you feel when I compared sins against God's authority with sins against His holiness? How should this change the way you treat your leaders?

SCRIPTURES & PRAYER

- The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good...So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience. (Romans 13:4–5 NLT)
- Fear God. Honor the king. (1 Peter 2:17)
- I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for . . . all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God. (1 Timothy 2:1–3)

ADDITIONAL READING:

- Romans 13:6–7
- Acts 23:5
- 1 Peter 2:13–14
- Colossians 3:22–23
- Ephesians 5:24
- Colossians 3:20
- Ephesians 6:2–3
- Deuteronomy 27:16
- 1 Chronicles 5:1
- Genesis 9:21–23

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, thank You for showing me why it's important to honor and respect the authorities in my life. Please give me the grace to see them as Your servants and honor them accordingly. I want my life to be different than what I see in the world. Thank You for giving me Your Spirit to see my leaders the way You see them.*

DECLARATIONS

- God sets me apart because of the honor I hold toward my leaders. Because of the respect I have for all authorities, whether I agree with them or not, God multiplies the opportunities I have to witness to others.
- I continually increase in favor in my workplace because of my diligent work and the respect I have for my employer, supervisors, and coworkers.
- My family flourishes because we live with honor and respect toward one another.

TAKE ACTION

Scripture exhorts us “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of

thanks be made for . . . all who are in authority” (1 Timothy 2:1). Choose the civil, social, or family leader whom you have the most difficulty honoring and write a prayer for them. Make sure that it is honoring and respectful in its tone. And be sure that you even thank God for them. Then pray that prayer every day this week.

LIVING UNDER COVER

- Authorities are God’s servants, therefore we are commanded to honor and respect them, not just to avoid punishment, but for our own good.
- We must also respect our authorities in social situations, like work, school, and so on. Our faithfulness in honoring them through our work will become a greater witness to them than our sermons or teachings.
- Families depend and thrive on respect and honor for authorities in every relationship, from husbands and wives to children and parents. God promises blessing and long life to those who honor.