

LESSON 5

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

LESSON SUMMARY

American culture does us a great disservice when it comes to how we relate to authority. We are used to having a voice in choosing our leadership and in how they lead, but in the church, God makes it clear: He is the only one who calls and appoints those who lead His people.

Scripture commands believers to respond toward their God-appointed leaders in the church in five ways: obey, submit, honor, respect, and love. Why does God tell us to do this? It's not for the leader's benefit, but for ours.

Remember Hannah, who prayed for years that God would give her a child, yet never received her request? As she poured her heart out to God at the Tabernacle, her spiritual leader insulted her in that low moment, accusing her of being drunk. If she were American, she would have become offended, fought back, and stormed off to another church. Instead, she spoke respectfully to him, and only then did she receive what she had prayed for.

Hannah's isn't the only story like this. In fact, we can see how seriously the Lord takes this from the stories of Moses, Aaron, Miriam, David, Saul, and Jeroboam, among others. You may be more gifted than your leader, but that doesn't matter when it comes to authority. Qualifications for leadership aren't even the question; the only question is who has God appointed.

What we need to realize when we are tempted to criticize our leaders is that they aren't just our leaders—they are God's servants. That means it isn't our job or our right to deal with their issues. It is God's job to deal with them. Our job is to obey, submit to, honor, respect, and love them.

REFLECT

- Which story from Scripture about those who did or didn't honor their God-given leadership stood out to you the most? What stood out to you about it?
- God commands more actions toward our spiritual leaders than toward our civil leaders, adding great respect and wholehearted love to what He requires of us. Why do you believe God does this?
- How were Aaron and Miriam 100 percent right, yet 100 percent wrong at the same time?
- How did my stories in this lesson reveal that God's instructions about how we should honor our leaders is not about them, but about us?
- How does it change the way you view your leader when you learn that the honor you have toward them determines the reward you can receive from them?

SCRIPTURES & PRAYER

- And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. (Ephesians 4:11-12)
- 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)
- Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. (1 Thesalonians 5:12-13 NLT)

ADDITIONAL READING:

- Hebrews 5:4
- Acts 13:2-4
- John 1:6
- 1 Timothy 5:22
- 1 Samuel 1:12-17
- Matthew 7:22
- Luke 10:17
- Numbers 12:1-8
- 1 Kings 14:9-10
- 1 Kings 15:29
- 1 Kings 16:3-7
- 1 Samuel 26:8-9
- Matthew 10:41
- Proverbs 21:1

PRAYER: *Father God, I'm seeing more and more just how important it is to You that I honor, respect, submit to, and obey the leaders You have appointed over me. Please help me to do this well. I want to honor You in the way that I honor them. I want Your best for my life, so please lead me into understanding how to receive that from You by honoring my leaders.*

DECLARATIONS

- I place my trust in God, not in my leader, to direct my path and establish me in His calling for my life. Therefore, I am free to honor my leader fully, knowing that God will direct both my leader's heart and my steps.
- God speaks to me about who He says my leaders are, so that I can honor them and receive the reward that God desires to give me.
- I am a good influence on my church community, modeling biblical honor,

respect, submission, obedience, and love for our leaders.

TAKE ACTION

Choose one practical way to encourage or support your pastor or church leader, and then do it. Some ideas could include buying them a gift card to their favorite coffee shop or restaurant, volunteering to serve in your church (especially in children's ministry), sending them a note of appreciation, being supportive in church meetings, small groups, and services, or being diligent to engage your whole self in worship services.

LIVING UNDER COVER

- God appoints those who lead the church. This means we cannot treat them like leaders who are accountable to us, because they aren't. They are accountable to God.
- The honor we have toward our leaders in church determines the reward we are able to receive from them. If we do not honor our leaders, we cut ourselves off from the benefits God intends for us to receive from Him through them.
- Many examples from Scripture show the benefits that come from honoring leadership, even when our leaders are ungodly.