

Respect for Authority

BORN TO GROW

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

STUDY 6

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Born to Grow series is designed to give you a good basic understanding of what it is to be a Christian and how to live a powerful and effective Christian Life.

It consists of six sets:

Foundations	6 studies
First Principles	7 studies
Kingdom Living	8 studies
Apostle's Doctrine	12 studies
Ten Commandments	11 studies
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RULE

Exodus 20:12

*Honour your father and your mother,
that your days may be long upon the land
which the LORD your God is giving you.*

The fifth commandment deals with respect for the structure of the family. Through that it deals with the general principle of respect for authority. This commandment, therefore, lays the foundation for family life, social order and the government of the church. It effects nearly every aspect of our lives. It provides foundations upon which we can develop an understanding of many aspects of our roles and responsibilities. It helps us understand our place as men and women and as members of our families, our churches and our communities.

The Principle of Authority

All authority ultimately comes from God. Ungodly authority will be judged by Him. Godly authority will be rewarded. Godly authority exercises Godly principles. God, the supreme source of all power and dominion, exercises His authority as a Father. That is, He exercises His authority as one who, out of the most gentle and compassionate love, provides direction that is designed to enhance the welfare, character and destiny of those subject to His care.

Romans 13:1-7

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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

All recognised authority must therefore receive its due honour whether we agree with it or not. Although obedience can be a matter of conscience, honour must always be given. A good example of this is found in the relationship between David and Saul. Although David could not obey Saul because of Saul's incompetence and abusiveness, he still held Saul in a place of due honour in his heart (1 Sam 24:9-12). Note how David addressed Saul as "my father", recognising the true parental nature of all authority. In giving this due honour, he trusted God to judge in the matter.

Therefore, for us to expect obedience from another, regardless of our position, we must be found competent in providing direction. This means that we must be responsibly proven trustworthy to each one in our care. This is so that they might be released into an obedience in their conscience to the highest power - that of God (Romans 13:1). It is only through being proven in this way that we can have the rule over another and therefore expect obedience.

It is important to note that the command of obedience given in Hebrews 13:17 is not one which requires blind subservience. The Greek word used here for obey refers to a willingness to be persuaded.

Hebrews 13:17

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.

Parental Authority

Our parents are the principal focus of authority in our lives. The commandment directs us to them. Children must not only honour, but also obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1). Adults, whilst retaining the attitude of honour, must not be bound by their parents in their life decisions.

This honour is due to those who have fulfilled the roles of motherhood and fatherhood in our lives. It need not necessarily relate to biological parentage. If there has been a breakdown through death or family problems between biological parent and child, the child must not feel in bondage to the biological parent. They should be released into giving this honour to the one or many who have fulfilled this role in their lives.

Being released in a proven relationship to parental authority provides for us the heart capacity to receive

- **direction** - through which life is guided toward the fulfilment of its meaning and purpose;
- **correction** - through which life is kept on course and character is developed;
- **instruction** - through which the wisdom necessary for responsible living is given.

REASON

The reason this commandment is needed as a rule in our lives is to cause us to relate properly to authority. This sets us free from self dependence and the anxiety born of self effort. It allows us to receive covering and security in the care of others. It is through this care by others that we often find our first understand of our loving Father God.

REACTION

In the last study we saw that self effort ends in frustration. This frustration produces much anxiety, resulting in resistance to any outside influence or control. Self determination is the result of this resistance. The self determined person sees authority as a threat. His behaviour may fall into one or more of the following three categories, the escaper, the destroyer and the usurper.

The Escaper

Those who seek to escape authority fall into two categories, the rebel and the drop-out.

The Rebel

The rebel despises authority. In their attempt to be seen to be free from authority, they will usually seek ways to make an open show of despising authority. They will do this often through provocative behaviour such as offensive language, unconventional dress and appearance, abusing privilege (out of disrespect), and so on. The rebel will often associate himself with causes that seem anti-authority. However a true rebel will have no real heart allegiance to any cause because of the discipline and coming under of authority that would be necessary. The true rebel sees causes merely as outlets for further demonstrating their despising of authority

Rebels become used as pawns in the power games of those to whom the causes matter. The communist revolutionary, Lenin, saw people in three categories, friends, useful idiots and enemies. Rebels are those who become the useful idiots.

Many of the attitudes of the rebel in placing themselves outside authority become those of the scorner.

Proverbs 21:24

*A proud and haughty man;
"Scoffer" is his name;
He acts with arrogant pride.*

See also

Proverbs 1:22, 3:34, 9:7,8; 13:1, 14:6, 19:25; 19:29; 21:11,24; 22:10; 24:9.

The Drop-Out

The drop-out resents authority because of its challenge to his idleness. He seeks to escape authority that he might be left to this selfishness. The drop-out, like the rebel will often indulge in offensive behaviour (if it gratifies his lusts), unconventional dress and appearance (out of laziness), abusing privilege (out of inconsideration), and so on. The drop-out, unlike the rebel will never be found aligning himself with causes since all he wants is a totally self-determined and self centred life free of all outside involvement. In this he is like the lazy man.

Proverbs 26:16

*The lazy person is wiser in his own eyes
Than seven men who can answer sensibly.*

See also Proverbs 6:6; 10:26; 13:4; 20:4.

The Destroyer

The destroyer sees authority as a threat to their self-determination Their reaction is therefore to try to subvert it or discredit it.

The Subversive

The subversive treats authority as an obstacle to be overcome or avoided. They have no heart for order. Their only goal is to successfully put into effect their self determined goals and ideas. The subversive is effectively lawless doing whatever they feel is necessary at any given time. They have cast off restraint. They are like those spoken of by the prophet Hosea.

Hosea 4:1-3

Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:

*There is no truth or mercy
Or knowledge of God in the land.
2 By swearing and lying,
Killing and stealing and committing adultery,
They break all restraint,
With bloodshed upon bloodshed.
3 Therefore the land will mourn;
And everyone who dwells there will waste away
With the beasts of the field
And the birds of the air;
Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.*

The Seditious

The seditious seeks to discredit authority. Their weapons are criticism and divisiveness. The seditious person thrives on exposing the faults of those in authority. Ham is our example of this:

Genesis 9:22

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

Paul warns us against the seditious in Romans.

Romans 16:17-18

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

The seditious person is recognised by their fault finding (which they often claim is discernment), complaining, constant offendedness, gossip and continual criticism. They become what the Bible calls perverse, whisperers and talebearers.

Proverbs 16:28

*A perverse man sows strife,
And a whisperer separates the best of friends.*

See also Proverbs 18:8; 26:20-22.

The Usurper

The usurper seeks to take over and control authority to serve their own ends. That is they seek position in order to foster their own self-determination. Usurpers may be seen to fall into two categories.

The Tyrant

The one who is a tyrant is one who has a set office in authority, however his motive of self determination causes him to abuse his place of power and thus to usurp God's authority.

Our examples are most of the kings of Israel and Judah, especially Rehoboam.

1 Samuel 8:11

And he said, "This will be the behaviour of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots."

1 Samuel 8:18

And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day."

The Position Seeker

The position seeker sees a secure place of self determination in having authority. The position seeker will seek to usurp authority for purely selfish motives and may even seem to have justification in a cause. The problem is that the position seeker (perhaps unwittingly) will use the seeming righteousness of the cause as a lever for his self exaltation.

An example of a position seeker is Adonijah who with seemingly just cause as he was older than Solomon, sought to elevate himself as King of Israel.

1 Kings 1:5-6

Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king"; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. 6 (And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, "Why have you done so?" He was also very good-looking. His mother had borne him after Absalom.)

RESULT

The result of disobedience to this commandment is that we become distrusting and suspicious and unable to relate to the authority that would provide nurture for us.

REMEDY

There are three aspects of the remedy. These are rod, revelation and release. The rod refers to the hand of God upon us in discipline. The revelation is that aspect of the truth which is in Christ that can set us free in each particular situation. The release is the living freedom that is experienced as the soul is set free to obey.

Rod

God's judgement upon all forms of self determination is inferiority and being cast down. A most extreme example of self determination and God's judgement upon it, is found in the story of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30-33). The judgement of Lucifer shows the same principle Isa 14:12-15). The judgement of God can be passed on from generation as with the effect on Canaan the son of Ham who uncovered his father's nakedness (Genesis 9:24-25).

Revelation

What we must see to be free from self determination is the importance of the place and influence of others in the plan of our lives, starting with our parents. Jesus is our example of this, where he is shown to have been subject (obedient) to his earthly parents even though they were unable to fully comprehend the purpose of his life.

Luke 2:49-51

And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" 50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. 51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

Even when he was of mature age Jesus is seen to have given honour to his mother by responding to her request at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:1-11).

Release

The release is into trust. This allows a total appreciation and acceptance of the influence of others, starting with our parents in our lives. This sets us free from any lingering sense of inferiority or shame concerning our parentage, race, nationality or social standing.

In this we find ourselves free to walk in humility and submission one to another.