

# The Christian And Authority

God's plan for Power  
Sharing

*By Jon Byler*

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## **Part One: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AUTHORITY**

Do you love to give orders? If you were like most people, you would answer “yes”. But, do you like to be told what to do? Most of us love to be in authority but resist being under authority. In this booklet, we’re going to look at what the Bible says about authority.

Before we look at the scriptures let’s take a test! For each question, circle the option that you would choose for that situation.

### **Questions on authority**

1. John has just completed High School and wants to take a computer course. His mom is supportive but his dad insists that he should take a course in sales. What should John do?
  - A. Leave home so that he can make his own way in the world.
  - B. Look for other sources of sponsorship to take the computer course.
  - C. Refuse to take the course in sales.
  - D. Attend classes during the day when the father is not aware.
  
2. Anne has prepared a skit that she wants to present in the church. But when she tells the pastor he says that there is no time. What should she do?
  - A. Leave the church and find another one.
  - B. Tell her friends how she has been mistreated by the pastor.
  - C. Stay in the church but sit at the back row and refuse to look at the pastor while he is preaching.
  - D. Ask the assistant pastor for a chance to give the skit.
  
3. Esther has been saved for three years when her husband suddenly refuses to allow her to attend the women’s fellowship. What should she do?
  - A. Attend only when he is not around.
  - B. Tell him, “I must obey God rather than men” and continue going.
  - C. Agree with him, but go to the meetings without his knowledge.
  - D. Stay at home.
  
4. At Benson’s shop the government requires that tax be charged on all the items that he sells but customers don’t like to pay the tax. What should he do?
  - A. Offer customers the choice of a receipt (with tax) or no receipt
  - B. Provide false returns to the tax department

- C. Ignore the requirement
- D. Pay the tax

All of these issues relate to how we respond to authority. Most of the time when we talk about authority we see it as a negative issue. It is something from which we desire to be freed. We like to be *in* authority but not *under* authority.

In this booklet, we will examine what the scripture teaches about authority. But first of all, what is authority?

**au•thor•i•ty** *n, pl -ties* **1** : a citation used in support of a statement or in defense of an action; *also* : the source of such a citation **2** : one appealed to as an expert **3** : power to influence thought or behavior **4** : freedom granted : RIGHT **5** : persons in command; *esp* : GOVERNMENT **6** : convincing force (underlining mine)

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**For this study, we will define authority as...**

“The power to govern which God gives to individuals and institutions to enable the smooth functioning of society.”

**There are three major principles of authority from scripture that every believer should understand.**

## **I. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AUTHORITY**

We need to recognize where authority comes from. Is authority man’s idea or God’s idea? Who established it? What is the foundation of authority that we need to understand? Let’s observe three foundational truths about the establishment of authority.

### **A. Authority is appointed by God**

The Bible clearly teaches that it is God who has established authority.

**Romans 13:1-7** “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to

**governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”**

### **1. God possesses all authority**

This passage implies this principle although it does not state it explicitly as Jesus did in **Matthew 28:18**, where He said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**

God possesses all authority. Any authority that anyone has is delegated authority from God. You can't delegate what you don't possess!

### **2. God appoints all authority**

God has not appointed “some” authority; but “all” authority. **Romans 13:1**, says, **“There is no authority except that which God has established.”** Authority is God's idea; it is His plan for each one of us to be under authority. His universe is a place of order and there is always a chain of command that He has established. If we are going to experience peace in our lives we must understand God's principles of authority and function properly within them.

### **3. God appoints authority for good**

**Romans 13: 4**, **“He is God's servant to do you good.”** This is the principle: God appoints authority for our good. We will look more closely at this later; for now realize that God's plan is good. Let's think for a moment about the practical side of authority.

By 8:00 in the morning, you have already benefited from authority in your life. If you slept undisturbed you can thank the **police** force (and the angels!). You turned on your **radio** or **TV** that functions under the licensing authority of the government. You ate **bread** (if you have bread for breakfast!) that was baked at a **factory** that runs on authority. Without the chain of command at that factory, the bread would not be made. If you are a parent you used authority to wake up your child and tell them to come and eat or what to wear. You expect them to obey and when they do things flow along nicely. When you went outside your home you entered a **vehicle**. Which side of the road did it drive on? Who told the driver to drive there? The person in authority.

When you come to **church** you meet an **usher** with authority to direct you to a seat. You sit down on benches that are clean because someone obeyed orders. The **person in charge** of the service tells us what to do and we obey. The **worship team** flows together because someone is in authority and others are following well.

Authority is a part of life and it is good for us! We often have a negative view of authority or wish that we could live without being under authority.

Bob Buford, *“There is no such thing as a life without authority. You can choose the game, but you can't choose the rules.”* Get used to being under authority!

## B. Authority is Allocated by God

God possesses all authority and He shares (or allocates) it to individuals and institutions.

### 1. God allocates authority within lines

Paul continues to say, “**The authorities that exist have been established by God.**” What are these authorities? Scripture teaches that God has established authority in four major areas of our lives.

#### a. Home

This is the first and perhaps the most important area that God has established authority in our lives. Many family problems result from an improper view of authority. Scripture teaches that in the home, the man is the head and the wife is to submit to that authority. (It also teaches that the man is under the authority of Christ and is to submit to Him! If men would submit to Christ, the women wouldn’t have such a problem submitting to them! **1 Corinthians 11:3, “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”** The “head” controls, guides and leads.)



Parents are in authority over the children and God expects obedience from the children. **Colossians 3:20, “Children obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”** Whose responsibility is it to see that this verse is obeyed? I believe that it is the responsibility of the parents, not the child. One of the greatest things a parent can do for their child is to teach them obedience and a proper attitude towards authority. When this lesson is not learned at home many problems erupt in schools and working places.

(For further study note the following scriptures: **1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1-3, 1 Timothy 3:4, Proverbs 1:8; 3:1,2; 4:1,2; 6:20-23; 7:1,2; 13:1; 15:5; 23:22, Exodus 20:12)**

#### b. Church

God has also established church leaders to be in a position of authority over us. **Hebrews 13:7, “Obey your (church) leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”** (See also **1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13**) Note the chain of authority in this verse: The people obey the leaders and the leaders are accountable to a higher authority.

In the church God has planned for positions of authority such as pastors, elders, deacons, prayer cell leaders, youth leaders, etc. Every church I know has some hierarchy of authority. The titles may change from church to church but there is always a chain of command.

Many people don't want to join a church because they don't want to be under authority. They prefer to go to a church for some time until they clash with the leaders; then they feel "called" to go to another church.

Such "spiritual tourists" don't understand God's plan for authority and will consistently miss the blessing that God had prepared for them. GOD PLANS FOR EVERY BELIEVER TO BE UNDER SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY. When a believer has not submitted him/her self to a spiritual authority he/she is walking in rebellion!

If you are a leader in the church it is crucial to recognize that God has given you authority and He has also placed you under authority. Notice that the verse in Hebrews says that the leaders will also give an account. God's system always has an order and even the highest person in the denomination will still give an account of his leadership to God.

### c. Government

Read **Romans 13:1-7** again. This passage teaches clearly that God has established government and He expects us to submit to it. This includes the top leader down to the local level official. It includes elected and appointed officials. It includes the police officer and the tax collector.

It does not say that we should submit only when we agree with everything they are doing, or if there is no corruption, but it says that we "**must submit ourselves to the governing authorities...**" (See also **1 Peter 2:13, 14**).

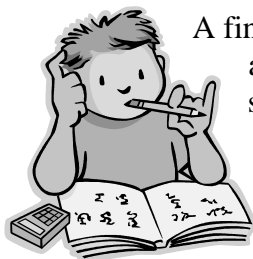
Submitting to the government means....

- Paying taxes,
- Obeying the laws,
- Respecting those in authority

In a corrupt system of government this is a difficult teaching for believers. It may help us to remember that when Paul wrote these words he was living under an unjust and corrupt government that killed many believers! He had been beaten and unjustly imprisoned by that government! (See **Acts 16:22-24**) Still, he wrote that we are to submit to the government!

Paul recognized that the government could jail him as a prisoner and he would still accomplish the purposes of God for his life. I don't believe that this means that we must blindly agree with everything that happens in the government; however, we must respect the authority that God placed in those positions.

### d. Work/School



A final area that God has established authority in our lives is in the area of employment or school. Many of the principles given in scripture for slave/master relationships apply to our places of employment or school for those who are students.



Headmasters, teachers, bosses, managing directors, and supervisors are all in positions of authority over us in our working places and schools.

God expects us to respect these positions not simply on the basis of how good the person over us may be but because he/she is in that position. **1 Peter 2:18** says, “**Submit...not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.**” Paul gives special instructions to those that are working for saved employers, “**Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.**” (1 Timothy 6:2) (For further study see: **Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; 1 Peter 2:18**)

## **2. God allocates authority within limits**

God has allocated authority to each of these four areas. We need also to recognize that each of these authorities operate within a certain sphere that God has ordained. He has given parents authority over their children in the home. But when the parent goes to work; the authority of the boss is in place. The government operates in the sphere which God has given to it, but it also has limits. The government cannot tell me how to worship God. The church also has limits. When the bishop comes to my house he cannot just enter any room in the house because he is the pastor. He must ask my permission! The church cannot tell me what to eat for breakfast.

*“When any one person or entity crosses their line of authority, then they no longer are backed by God's authority or His power.”* Harold Eberle

This principle is illustrated by the early church in **Acts 4**. When Peter and John were commanded to stop preaching the Gospel they disobeyed! But they were not rebelling against authority; they were simply claiming the authority that was rightfully theirs. The government (the religious leaders in this case) had overstepped their boundaries.

Authority is appointed by God; allocated by God and...

## **C. Authority is Accountable to God**

Each authority gets authority directly from God and is answerable directly to God. This has implications for us in how we *use* our authority and how we respond *to* authority.

### **1. We are accountable for our use of authority**

#### **a. We are accountable for our personal use of authority**

God will hold each of us accountable for the things for which we are personally responsible.

God has given me the power to choose certain things for my life and He will hold me accountable. **Romans 14:12**, “**So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.**” There are choices and decisions that each of us makes over our own lives and God will hold us accountable. He will hold me accountable for the way I have developed my own potential, my

gifts, my time, etc. I am accountable before God for my spiritual health. This is my personal use of authority.

**b. We are accountable for our public use of authority**

We are also accountable of how we use authority in the lives of others. Most of us are in some position of authority over others. It may be over your children or over the maid. You may be a husband in authority in your home. At your working place you may have a position of authority over others. At church, you may be an usher with authority or a deacon, prayer cell leader or worship team member. We need to realize that God will hold us accountable for how we use our authority. Remember **Hebrews 13:7**, **“Obey your (church) leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.”**

Those in authority will account to God for their use of authority. **1 Peter 4:5**, **“But they (the wicked) will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”**

**2. We are accountable for our response to authority**

We are responsible for how we use our authority and also for our response to authority. Paul gives instructions in several verses which we have already read about our response to authority. Therefore, we are responsible for how we respond. We may respond with a Christ-like attitude or a devilish attitude, the choice is ours. Sometimes we justify our wrong response by pointing out the error of the person in authority over us. “If only he would be decent, I wouldn’t mind doing what he says.” Or “I wouldn’t do what he said because even he doesn’t do it!”

Recognize that **we are not accountable for those in authority over us!** They will answer to God and He will deal with them. God doesn’t expect me to change my superiors; He just wants me to change my response to them. Trying to change others is a tremendous burden that God never intended for us to carry. Wives, stop trying to change your husband; let God work on him. Teenagers, stop praying for your parents to change, instead ask God to change you. Employees, don’t worry about your bosses mistakes, do your job! God holds each of us accountable for the way we respond to authority.

This is crucial for us to understand since it greatly helps us to respond correctly to authority, the subject of our next teaching section.

**Conclusion**

We have seen that God has established authority. He has appointed all authority, He has allocated that authority in four main areas, each with its limit, and that because God has established authority, we are accountable to Him for how we use and respond to authority.

**Commitment:**

(a) **Accept authority in your life.** Ask God this week to remind you of all the people who are in authority over you. Ask Him to help you respond properly to them. In which of the four areas do you find it difficult to accept authority?

(b) **Accept that God is holding you accountable.** If you have been abusing your authority over others, it's time to cry out to God for forgiveness and to confess your sin to Him and to those you have abused. Husbands, have you used your authority over your wife in the right way?

(c) **Accept God's authority over your life.** If you have never submitted to the authority of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings I invite you today to accept His authority over you.

**Commitment**

- **Accept authority in your life.**
- **Accept that God is holding you accountable.**
- **Accept God's authority over your life.**

## Part Two: THE RESPONSE TO AUTHORITY

### II. THE RESPONSE TO AUTHORITY

How do we respond to authority? What does the Bible teach us to do in respect to authority? Because God has established authority our response to it is very crucial. There are many ways that we can respond to authority in our lives. We can try to *ignore it* and go our own way. A teacher may tell us not to leave the compound but we go anyway. We can *rebel against it* and fight it. We can try to *run away from it* trying to escape from all authority or we can *submit to it*. What is the Christian way?

**Romans 13:1, 2, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.”**

#### A. God Expects Submission

This verse makes it clear that God’s expectation in relation to the authorities He has established is submission. Many other verses that we have already mentioned make it clear that we are expected to submit to authority. Submission is normally seen as a bad word with negative connotations. However, I want to say that...

##### 1. Submission is beautiful!

What is submission? What does it look like? Why is it beautiful?

**1 Peter 3:4-6, “Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”**

Before we look at what submission is, let’s consider several misconceptions about submission.

**Submission is not:**

##### **Simply obedience**

Submission includes obedience but goes beyond it. Submission is not only an external compliance with the demands of the authority, but a heart attitude. Sometimes rebellion may be done quietly or even with the pretext of submission but anything short of true submission is actually rebellion. It is possible to outwardly obey the *command* of the one in authority but inwardly not recognize his right to give the order. The story is told of a small child who had disobeyed his mother. As a punishment he was told to sit on a stool for some time. He glared at his mother as he grudgingly sat down. As he sat he said, “I’m sitting down on the outside, but *inside* I’m still standing up!” External obedience is not submission.

**Romans 13:5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience”**

We can submit out of fear of the authority or respect for God who gave the authority.

### **Total agreement**

Some believe that submission means not disagreeing with authority. I believe it is possible to respectfully disagree and share it in a proper way while still recognizing the right of the person over you to make the final decision.

### **A sign of inferiority**

We often assume that submission means that the person who submits is inferior to the person above him/her. This is not true. Submission has nothing to do with the worth of a person. It is very different to say, "That person is *higher* than I am" and "that person is *better* than I am." That's why Jesus could say, "The Father is greater than I." He had submitted to the Father, but He was still equal in worth with the Father.

Some wives are superior to their husbands in terms of intellect, education or earning capacity. But they are supposed to submit. A church member may be more gifted than the pastor but he is called to submit. Submission does not mean you are inferior.

### **A sign of weakness**

Many people feel that submission is a sign of weakness. It is giving in to a stronger person. However, this is not a true picture of submission. The model is Jesus Himself, who voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father for the sake of accomplishing a divine plan. Jesus was neither inferior, nor weak but He submitted. A superior person can submit to an inferior one when it is done as a sign of respect for authority.

### **So, what is submission?**

*"Submission is to recognize and respect the authority to those over us and to willingly support their leadership."*

My definition of submission is:

*Submission recognizes the right of that person to be in authority over me. It respects that authority and follows willingly.*

## **2. Submission is beneficial**

Because submission is commanded of God it must also be good and should benefit us in some ways. We will look at five beneficial things that submission does for us.

### **a. Submission places us under the protection of authority**

When we submit to authority we come under the protection of that authority. We too often think of authority as *inspection* instead of *protection*! We think the person in authority is looking down at us waiting to find a problem. Submission to authority is like an umbrella over our heads that protects us from the rain or the hot sun. As long as we stay under it we are safe. It is a biblical principle that those in positions of authority



will be held accountable for those under them. It follows that I am protected when I am under authority. This protection may be legal protection; it may be spiritual protection, physical or social protection.

We are protected from **danger**. I have a young son who is under my authority according to the Word of God. I give instructions to him and I expect him to obey me. Why do I do this? I do it because I want him to grow and become a mature, responsible adult. I want him to learn some very important lessons in life. Sometimes I tell him things that are for his protection. I tell him “Don’t play out in the street.” When he is older I will tell him that he should not commit fornication. As long as he obeys my authority he will be protected from the danger that will come. If he refuses my authority a car might hit him or he might get a sexual disease. As long as he is under my authority I am responsible for him and he is protected. But if he rejects my authority then he will come under all sorts of temptations and circumstances that he is not able to overcome. He may feel that I am just trying to keep him from having fun. He may not understand what happens when a big vehicle hits a child. If he rebels and disobeys, he will learn the hard way that rebellion is dangerous.

A young boy was one time playing under a large tree. His father was sitting nearby and called out to the son, “Come here, my son.” The son came immediately without questions. As soon as he came out from under the tree, a large python fell right on the spot where he had been playing. His obedience saved his life.

When we submit we are also protected from **blame**. If the teacher tells you to clean the room and you are cleaning it when someone comes to question you, “Why are you doing that?” you will tell them, “The teacher told me to do it.” If your pastor tells you to come for an overnight prayer meeting and while there the local police comes and demands to know the reason for the meeting you will simply say, “See the pastor.”

God did not give authority to **dominate**, but to **protect**. In **Numbers 30:1-16** God gives instructions concerning those under authority who make unwise decisions. If they are under authority they are protected from making mistakes, since those in authority over them are responsible. Authority protects us. We need to learn to appreciate it.

This should not be mistakenly applied when we are asked to do something that is clearly wrong. Then we must obey **“God rather than men...” (Acts 5:29)** However, most of the time when we struggle with submission it is not an issue of God’s command versus man’s. We just don’t want to obey!

#### **b. Submission provides freedom for God to shape our character**

The second good thing that submission does for us is that it provides freedom for God to shape our character. God has many things that He wants to shape in our lives and character. He wants to teach us many things so that we will become more Christ-like. Often times He chooses to use the one in authority over us to do this work in us.

The writer of **Hebrews** states, “**Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness.**” (Hebrews 12:9, 10)

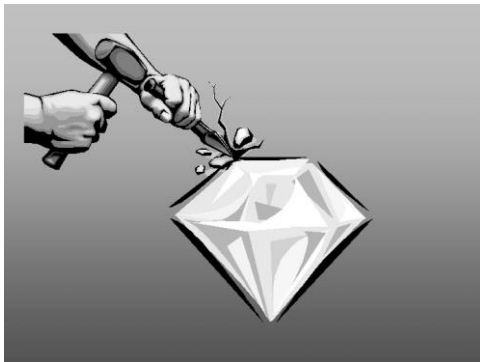
**Hebrews 5:8** says of Jesus, “**Although He was a son He learned obedience from what He suffered.**”

**Hebrews 12:11** says, “**No discipline seems pleasant at the time but rather painful. Later on however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace to those who have been trained by it.**” Where does this discipline come from? It comes from those in authority over us. From the pastor, teacher, boss, or parent in our lives. When we submit to the authority that is over us God will work through them to shape our character so that we can better reflect Jesus.

God may realize that we need more patience. He might use a parent or another authority figure to seek to produce patience in us. This authority says “no” to the thing that we want to do. It is so difficult to wait, but God is trying to produce patience in us.

God may allow us to be under a difficult boss to develop perseverance in us. He may allow our parents to be tough with us so that we will learn to be submissive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. He can use any authority figure to develop our character.

Even when the authority is not right, God can use them to shape us. When we are under an authority that is bad, such as an abusive husband or a corrupt official God will use even their weaknesses to shape godly character in us--if we yield to his plan for us. This is true whether the authority is a Christian or not.



Many people miss out on this blessing because they refuse to submit to some authority that God has established in their life. Maybe it is a mother or teacher or even the pastor. They decide that they know more than the person in authority and choose to go their own way. If you are in this position you need to go to that person and ask them to forgive you and place yourself under their authority.

*“We cannot go through life kicking and screaming against authority and expect God to open wide the pearly gates to let us in – to infect others. Heaven is a place of total submission and we won’t like it if we aren’t already submissive.” –Robert Mattox*

Recently I receive a letter from **my niece** who was learning these lessons as a young girl. She was working as a volunteer in a Christian organization when she wrote these words:

“I’ve shared with some over the past months about some of the struggles in leadership here. A lot of it was my learning to walk humbly underneath leaders who weren’t leading...so that when I saw things that I believed God ached to do and things that my heart yearned for but things in which I had no power to do or act, I needed to wait. On God. To pray. To not speak. To pray. To pray.

“So I did. And six months of crying out to God for him to change things...frustration, hurt, anger, etc...came to a head this summer largely...it was so hard to see clearly sometimes. Late into many a night, crying out on my bed for JESUS to move here...and still He called me simply to worship, to praise and thank Him, and from that perspective receive His hope, perspective, and BELIEF for the situation.

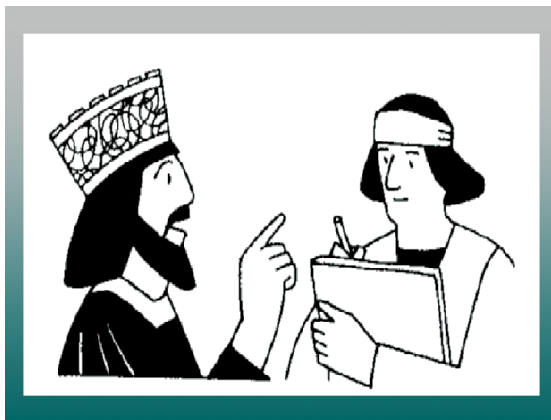
“It’s been by far my hardest struggle here, but one which has taught me more than I know. About God’s anointed lines of authority, about submission, about trusting God...about waiting. I’ve learned in a deep way that “God’s ordered ways are best.” He puts His leaders in place and says to love and pray for them. Anything I do outside those safe lines of authority, He will not bless.”

She continues to write about how God began to move and open doors for them in the ministry. She was going through God’s training. It’s tough and at times very painful but as the writer of **Hebrews** says, “**Later on however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.**”

### c. Submission provides an opportunity for God to guide us

Another benefit of authority is that it can lead us or give direction to our lives.

GOD PROVIDES DIRECTION IN OUR LIVES THROUGH THOSE IN AUTHORITY OVER US. So many times, we miss the best path simply because we don’t acknowledge those in authority over us. We miss their wisdom and insight because we don’t want to listen to them. We should fear to do things against the advice of those in authority over us. Again and



again scripture gives examples of authority figures giving advice or direction to those under them.

Abraham helped find a wife for his son Isaac in **Genesis 24**. Moses’ father-in-law helped him with wise advice in **Exodus 18:13-24**. Timothy was instructed in the way of the Lord by his mother and grandmother (**2 Timothy 1:5**). Much of the teaching which we have in the New Testament came from Paul or another church leader giving

instructions on how to live the Christian life. We need to listen to those in authority over us.



When I had been a pastor for several years, I received an invitation to lead a ministry in Kenya, *Centre for Christian Discipleship*. After praying with my wife about it we felt that it was the right direction for us to go. But I also went to speak with several people that were in authority over me to seek their counsel. Each of them affirmed the step that we were ready to take. We sensed God's confirmation through their counsel and made the transition with great confidence that we were moving in the will of God.

Solomon understood this principle when he wrote, **“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.” (Proverbs 12:15 and 19:20)**

Children, go to your parents and ask advice. Be ready to wait if they don't bless you in the step you want to take. Wait for their blessing before you get married or enroll in training.

Wives, ask your husband, even the unsaved one, for advice. God can guide you through his life.

Men, find another person that you can go to for counsel or ask your pastor for advice. Seek advice before buying that property or starting a business. Seek advice before accepting that job offer. Many men have learned the hard way that what seems good initially is not always wise.

Young men, get counsel. The men are not your enemies; they can give you guidance. Deliberately place yourself under authority.

#### **d. Submission provides opportunity for God's anointing to flow through us**

All sincere Christian leaders desire to be used of God. We want His anointing to flow through our lives and ministries. How will this happen? It will happen only when we recognize and submit to God's established chain of authority. God recognizes authority. In the Old Testament we can



find a pattern of ministry. God would use a prophet or another authority figure to give a call to someone for ministry. Often that person would be set apart for the divine calling through the application of oil. The person received the call and the anointing through an authority figure. (See **Exodus 28:41; 29:7; 1 Samuel 16:12; 1 Kings 1:34; 19:15; 2 Kings 9:3-6** for a few examples.) He was expected to fulfill his call under the person who called him. As long as they operated within their call, God prospered them. When kings stepped out of line the person who had called them could

come back and rebuke them for their mistake. When Saul offered the sacrifice without Samuel, he paid dearly for his rebellion.

In the New Testament, the pattern is the same except laying on of hands often replaces the anointing with oil. Paul laid hands on Timothy and gave him the authority to go out and represent him to the churches. (**2 Timothy**

**1:6)** Paul's blessing to Timothy released the gifts that God had placed in him. The apostles in Jerusalem blessed and affirmed Peter's ministry to the Samaritans and Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. Paul felt accountable, not only to the Lord but to those that had sent him out. He reported back to the Apostles in Jerusalem and to the church in Antioch. (**Acts 11:18; 14:27; 15:4; 21:17-19**)

God uses leaders who are properly submitted to authority. He cannot bless rebellion. So many pastors and ministers are struggling in their call, trying desperately to do great things for God but they have failed to recognize authority. Others are externally submitted to authority but inwardly they are just waiting for a good opportunity to leave. They struggle to obey the requirements of their leaders and don't fully support them financially or spiritually. In order for God's fullest blessing to flow, a leader must recognize and submit to God's appointed authority.

***GET IN A POSITION OF SUBMISSION TO  
RECEIVE THE COMMISSION OF GOD!***

**e. Submission protects us from the wrath of God**

Rebellion against authority brings serious consequences. The reason is given in **Romans 13:1, 2** where Paul tells us that resisting the authorities is resisting something that God has established. It says that those who rebel will “**bring judgment upon themselves.**”

The Bible tells us in **1 Samuel 15:23** that “**rebellion is like the sin of divination**” (or witchcraft). This is a serious sin! Why is rebellion so serious that it is compared to witchcraft? When we are involved in witchcraft we expose ourselves to direct attack from the enemy. We open the door and welcome his power to influence us. In the same way when we rebel, we remove ourselves from God's ordained protection. We have come out from the protection of the umbrella. Once we are not under God's protection we are in enemy territory where the enemy has a wide open door to attack us. That is why excommunication from the church is referred to as, “handing over to Satan” (**1 Corinthians 5:5**)

Many believers believe that rebellion is a small issue that can easily be joked about. Comments like, “He can't tell me what to do!” and “I listen only to the Lord” may sound very innocent but they are deadly poison.

You may think that it doesn't hurt to talk evil about the government leaders, your boss, your husband, your parents or even the pastor. But God's word makes it a serious sin. **Numbers 16** gives the account of the rebellion of Korah in which he and another 250 men challenged the authority of Moses. Korah basically said to Moses, “You're not special. We can also do what you do.” He didn't recognize that Moses was God's appointed leader. The result? The death of more than 14,000 people! God doesn't appreciate disrespect for His anointed leader!

Disrespect for parents is just as serious and is a violation of the fifth commandment. (See **Deuteronomy 5:16** and **Ephesians 6:1-3**) This is a commandment with a promise, “So that you may live long and it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you” and an implied curse for disobedience. In **Deuteronomy 21:18-21** God gives the death penalty to a son who is rebellious and will not obey his father and mother.

There brings us to an extremely important principle in scripture: OUR RESPONSE TO HUMAN AUTHORITY IS OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S AUTHORITY. Think about that very seriously. It is not possible to fully submit to God if you have not submitted to your parents! If we rebel against the policeman we are rebelling against a God-given authority. If we disobey our boss we are disobeying God. If we refuse to obey the pastor it is resisting God!

Many times we think, “I can’t wait to get out from under authority.” Or we may feel, “I can’t wait to become a pastor so I can give orders.” Or, “I can’t wait to become the overseer...”

I have news for you today, you will never be out from under authority...get used to it! God will always bring another authority into your life to continue His work on you.

Therefore, it is a serious problem if you are not submitting to and obeying those in authority over you. Lack of submission and obedience in your life will bring problems. It will place you under the wrath of God as well as bring problems in your ministry. Remember that the law of sowing and reaping teaches that a person will reap what he sows. Therefore, if a person sows rebellion he will also reap rebellion. Many times persons have refused to remain under authority and have gone out to start their own church or ministry. Later, they discover that those under them will not submit to their authority! They have only reaped what they have sown.

Listen to the wisdom of Solomon in **Proverbs 5:11-14**. **“At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, ‘How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction. I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors.’”** There are serious consequences for disobedience. The wrath of God will be upon those who resist authority in their lives. Choose God’s way today! Submission protects us from the wrath of God.

Realize the difference between someone’s personality and his position. You can easily see their weaknesses, but respect their position as from God.

## **B. God Explains Submission**

What does submission look like? How can we know if we are submissive?

Six tests of submission to authority:

### **1. Submissive people can be corrected**

Someone who is a follower will be able to be corrected. They will have a spirit of respect and humility. A submissive person can be told that he has made a

mistake. Remember as a leader that you are also a follower. You are still learning; you are also growing in Christ. When someone comes to you and points out a mistake, how do you respond? Do you resist and try to defend yourself? Or submit and accept the correction? How often our flesh rises up and says, “Who do you think you are to correct me?” “Do you think you’re perfect? What gives you the right to point out my error?”

This is not to say that in every situation the person in authority will be right in their correction of you but in every case your response should be one of humility and willingness to be corrected.

**Proverbs 15:31** gives wisdom as a reward for those who listen to correction, “**He who listens to a life giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.**”

## **2. Submissive people can admit mistakes**

If you are a follower, you will be able to admit a mistake. We often allow ourselves to believe the lie of the world that *leaders do not make mistakes and if they do, they don't admit it*. Why? They don't have the attitude of a follower. They feel that they are accountable to no one. In Christian leadership we should be able to say, “I am sorry, I was wrong.” These are the 6 hardest words to say in the English language!

## **3. Submissive people do not “lord it over” (1 Peter 5:3)**

Jesus teaches us to lead as servants. A servant recognizes authority and therefore is not likely to abuse those under him. He will not demand or dictate. He will not use his position for personal gain. If you have the attitude of a follower you will be less likely to abuse your authority in the lives of others. You will not try to dominate since you know you are also a follower. Submission helps us not to “lord it over” others.

## **4. Submissive people are accountable**

Accountability is difficult for a leader unless he acknowledges that he is also a follower under another person's authority.

Those who are truly under authority don't find it difficult to be accountable to the authority over them. Wives who are submissive don't have a problem tell their husbands what they are doing or how they spent the money. Youth leaders who are submissive don't have any problem in reporting their plans to the pastor. Members who are submissive can come to the pastor and explain why they won't attend church on Sunday. Pastors who are accountable don't hesitate to give a report of their activities to their overseer or bishop. Every leader should be accountable to someone.

## **5. Submissive people are loyal**

Those who submit to authority will be loyal to that authority. Loyalty simply means that I am with you for better or for worse. It means that I will defend the reputation of my leader. I will speak well of my organization to others.

Loyalty does not always mean agreement. Contrary to what the world models, I can disagree with someone who is over me and still be loyal. The world interprets any slight difference between the leader and the follower as betrayal and

disloyalty. But we will not always agree. We are different people with different minds. We will see things differently. I should not expect to agree with every decision passed by my leaders. Loyalty means that when I disagree I might respectfully share my view with the leader, but be willing to obey if he doesn't change. In fact, I believe that those who are willing to respectfully disagree show more loyalty than those who secretly disapprove. Some will come to a meeting and keep quiet while decisions are being reached. Then they go out grumbling and complaining about the decisions reached by the group. They will not be able to follow wholeheartedly. This is not only disloyalty but rebellion in disguise. Be loyal or leave the organization!

## 6. Submissive people are respectful

The Bible says in **1 Thessalonians 5:12** that we are to “**respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord.**” This verse talks especially about church leaders but applies to all in authority over us. Leaders deserve respect. It is a hard job to lead. It calls for sacrificing of time and energy. There are meetings; there are people who need to be visited and many other things to be done. Leaders have to deal with all the needs in the church. It can be wearisome and tiring. You need to recognize what they are doing. You need to respect that work. They are over you in the Lord. That doesn't mean that they are better than you or more educated, but it means that in this church they are in a position of authority over you and you need to respect them, not only for what they do but for the position they hold.

Without respect it is very difficult to lead. If you stop respecting your leaders you are plotting for their downfall, because they need your respect. **GIVE IT TO THEM!** If you will give them respect they will be less likely to demand it from you in the form of titles, etc. That verse also says to hold them in the highest regard in love. You are commanded to respect that position and God will consider it a sin if you fail to obey this verse. I am not saying that you must agree with everything that they say. I am not saying that you must overlook sin in their lives; but you must hold them in high regard. What does this mean or how can you do this?

### a. Respect is shown by controlling the tongue

One of the best ways that you can show respect to those in authority over you is to **control your tongue**. Make a commitment that you will not talk evil of any of the leaders of your church, home, job, and country. You should be willing to make this commitment about anyone but at least start with the leaders. What a blessed thing it would be if those in your community would never know the problems in your church. Don't get together with other believers and compare leaders! And don't talk badly about the leaders of your church in front of your children.



Some parents go home after church on Sunday and have “roasted Pastor” for lunch as they tear down their pastor in front of the children.

Those who talk evil about the leaders of a church do more damage than someone who comes with a bulldozer and starts tearing down the walls.

**b. Respect is shown by following willingly**

You show respect for your leaders when you willingly follow their vision and direction. Do what is requested of you. Don’t drag your feet. If you oppose an idea talk to that leader openly, but don’t say yes and then drag your feet. It is very discouraging for a leader to announce a meeting; work hard at preparing it and then people don’t come.

**Hebrews 13:17**, says that we should obey our leaders so that their work will be **“a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to them.”**

What a joy it is to a leader when people follow willingly with full support. Not grumbling, complaining, or discouraging others, but with wholehearted support.

**C. God Enables Submission**

It is often difficult to submit to authority, esp. for a young person. But God will not require more of us than we can do with His help.

**1. God gives His example**

Jesus is our example of submission and one which should challenge each of us. Submission is not just for children or women; it is a manly thing to do.

**Philippians 2:5-11**, “ **Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature (or in the form of) God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**”

**2. God gives His grace**

**1 Peter 5:5, 6** “**Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, cloth yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”**

God is able to provide the proper attitude that we need towards authority in our lives. When we find ourselves resisting authority we need to remember that God will also oppose us. But if we are humble He will give us the grace that we need. Ask Him for His grace to enable you to submit to the authority in your life. He will gladly provide it to you.

**Commitment:**

What has been your response to authority? Have you truly submitted yourself to those in authority over you?

In the home?

At church?

In the government?

In your working place?

Today you can declare, "I now submit to the authority God has placed over my life and experience His blessing as I do so."

## Part Three: THE PRACTICE OF AUTHORITY

We have already looked at two principles.

**Part One:** The establishment of Authority (Authority is appointed, allocated, accountable)

**Part Two:** The response to authority (God expects, explains, and enables submission)

Submission is for our good; God uses it to shape us like a diamond

Authority protects us like an umbrella.

For this final section, we want to look at several practical things that we should do to put into practice what we have already learned. There are three things we should practice:

### III. THE PRACTICE OF AUTHORITY

#### A. The practice of responsibility

##### 1. Our responsibility to all authority

###### a. Submission (Rom. 13:1-7)

We have already looked in depth at the aspect of submission in the last teaching. But be reminded that God expects submission to authority and he also enables us to submit. Willingly place yourself under the authority God has established in the home, church, government and in your working place. It is a choice that you can make and a step you can take.

###### b. Supplication

**1 Timothy 2:1-3, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior.”**

Pray for those in authority over you. Put them on your prayer list. Pray for a pastor every day. Pray for a government official every day. Pray for your boss at work every day. Wives, pray for your husband every day. Pray for your parents. Pray for God to guide them. Pray for God to use them in your life. Pray for them to grow in wisdom and understanding. Pray for their protection from the enemies' schemes.



*When we pray for people, it is much harder to complain about them.*

###### c. Support

Again and again we are urged to give leaders our support as we show respect to them.

In the last lesson we saw that we show respect by controlling our **tongues** and following willingly.



Consider the following verses:

### **Church**

**1Thessalonians 5:12** “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.”

### **Work**

**1Timothy 6:1, 2** “All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.”

**1 Peter 2:18** “Slaves, submit to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.”

### **Government**

**1Peter 2:17** “Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.”

### **Home**

**Ephesians 5:33** “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

In every sphere of authority, the Bible instructs us to respect those over us. Without our support and respect, it is very difficult for the person over us to function effectively in the role God has given him/her.

## **2. Our responsibility to specific authority**

### **a. In the home**

#### **To teens:**

**Learn to submit to your parents.** No matter how difficult it is, God will bless it because submission to authority is really submission to Him. At times, you will feel like they don't understand you and maybe they don't!

But Gothard says, “*It is more important for the teenager to understand God working through his parents than that his parents understand him.*”

You will never be greatly used by God if you don't learn to respect the authority He has established for you at home. It's not what happens to you; but what happens in you that God is concerned about.

**To wives:**

Learn to respect your husband, not necessarily because of who he is but because God has given him the place of leadership in the home. Encourage his leadership. Let him know that you respect him. Be careful what you say about him to others.

**To husbands:**

Recognize that you are accountable to Christ Himself for how you use authority. You are to lead as Christ led, with the heart of a servant and genuine love for your wife and children. If you can't lead at home, don't expect to lead in the church. Be careful how you speak about those over you because you are planting seeds in your children for how they will respond to your authority.

Rick Renner, *"Often if a potential leader has sour feelings toward authority, this will also usually be seen in the attitude that his or her children have toward authority."*

**b. In the church****To members:**

I believe that the most important thing we can do is to allow the church leadership to be over us. Too many times we take the church as a social club where we attend but we have never willingly submitted ourselves to the pastors or home church leaders. They are not perfect, but they are commissioned by God to be in those places. We need to learn to recognize and respect their leadership over us. We must show honor to them.

**Confess a critical spirit**

It is so easy to sit in the pew and criticize everything that the leader is doing and saying. Critical spirits are a sign of a wrong attitude towards authority. Internally this is taking authority over the leader and is a form of manipulation. It is very dangerous when we start thinking, "If only I were in charge." (This is especially true for persons who have leadership gifts and abilities who are not currently leading.) Even our prayers can begin to be a form of manipulation when we pray, "God change the pastor to be like I want him to be." We should pray for God to guide him, but not to try to control him in prayer.

Harold Eberle speaks of "Poising his soul" against authority. The person begins to think judgmental thoughts and internally takes authority over that person. This is a form of manipulation similar to what witches do to control and manipulate others. Intercessors sometimes fall into this trap. They can move from praying for the pastors to starting to take responsibility for the direction of the church leadership and feel that they have the answers. They are not to pray

for the pastor to become like they want him to be but for God to guide him and for him to experience success. They should be lifting him up and allow God to direct his life.

### **Be accountable**

Report to the pastor or cell group leader where you are going. Get permission for the mission! Giving tithes is a form of accountability and shows that you have submitted to their authority.

Go to your pastor for advice and counsel. Many people wait until they are in deep trouble to ask for advice. Go before you reach the bottom!

### **Leave well**

Many people miss God's blessing when they leave a church without blessing from the ones God has placed in authority over them. In many cases, the person leaving doesn't have a proper attitude towards authority. He/she is not willing to submit to the established authority and feels "God's call" to leave. So he goes to start a new ministry or church. Things seem to go well for some time but inevitably, there will be problems. Members will also leave him and go elsewhere. He is simply reaping what he has sown in the realm of authority.

## **c. In the government**

What responsibility do we have towards the government?

### **Obey laws**

We show submission to the government when we obey the laws of the land. This includes driving laws, land laws, etc. Christians should be law-abiding citizens.

### **Pay taxes**

No one likes to pay taxes, but the scripture makes it clear that we should do so. Failing to report income for tax purposes is rebellion against God's authority.

### **Work for positive change**

We have a responsibility to get involved and to be the salt and light that God has called us to be. We need to do this in a way that is respectful, yet bold.

## **d. In the marketplace**

### **Pray for the success of your boss**

Your presence in your working place (or school) should bring a blessing to your boss just like Joseph's life did when he worked for Potiphar. Too many Christians are praying for their boss to be transferred instead of transformed! Pray that God will prosper the business.

## **Work hard**

Do your best at your working place. Christians should be the best workers around. Paul says that we are to work as though our boss is Jesus (See **Colossians 3:23**). Go the extra mile, be the first to arrive and do your work with excellence.

## **B. The practice of request (appeal)**

Being under authority always raises issues of what we should do when we disagree with the authority. Does it mean that we ignore our own opinions and keep quiet? What about when the authority requests something of me that violates my moral convictions? Is there any way that God has enabled those under authority to make requests or appeals? The answer is YES! Those who are submitted to authority have the power to appeal to the one in authority over them.

### **1. The principle of appeal**

God has established authority and calls us to submit to it. As we noted when we defined submission, this does not always mean that we agree with the authority. It also does not mean that the person in authority over us is always right. At times, the authority may ask us to do something that is wrong. Then God asks us to appeal to that authority.

**Proverbs 21:1, “The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases.”** This verse teaches that God is in control of the authority and He can direct the authority in any manner that He wishes. God can bring pressure on a leader that will cause him to change. God has all authority and we need to learn to trust His power to bring appropriate change.

Wherever there is a chain of command, there is a method of appealing to a higher authority.

### **2. The process of appeal**

The manner in which we make our appeal often determines the outcome. We need to be very careful when we make an appeal to authority. What is the process? Bill Gothard suggests the following 7 steps to take when we are asked to do something wrong:

#### **a. Check our attitudes**

What kind of attitude do we have? Is there any rebellion in our hearts? Are we bitter towards the authority?

#### **b. Clear our conscience**

If we have been wrong in action or attitude, we need to confess it and make it right.

#### **c. Discern basic intentions**

Ask, “What is the reason the person in authority is making this request?” Find out their goals and wishes.

**d. Design creative alternatives**

Is there any solution that would meet the desires of the authority, yet allow you to do what is right? Daniel is an excellent example of this. He offered a testing period that would protect his boss from harm.

**e. Appeal to our Authority**

Give the reasons for your position without condemning. Explain the alternative and how it will help him reach his goal. Then leave the final decision up to him.

**f. Give God time to change our authority's mind**

God can bring pressure on the authority and he may react towards you. Things may even get hotter! Keep allowing God to shape your character.

**g. Suffer for not doing what is wrong**

If the above steps have not brought about change then be willing to suffer for doing right. This step will seldom be necessary if the first 6 steps are followed correctly.

You have incredible power with an appeal done in the right spirit and done correctly. Your submission allows God freedom to work on the person in authority.

We need to practice our responsibility; request and finally we need to make a practice of...

**C. The practice of repentance**

Unless God has previously dealt deeply in your life on the issue of authority, by now you recognize that some things are not right in your life in this area. You may not have recognized God's authority in some area or you may have been responding wrongly to His authority. What should you do?

Three steps each of us can take when we acknowledge that we have gone wrong.

**1. Recognize**

The first step is to recognize where you have failed. Is it in the area of respect for authority? Obedience? Is it at home or in the church? Recognize specifically where you have failed to follow God's plan for authority in your life.

**2. Repent**

The second step is to repent. Repentance means to change our way of thinking about what we have done. We used to think it was normal; now we acknowledge that it is wrong.

Repentance is often done to God and certainly, we need to confess our sins to Him. But we often need to repent to those we have wronged as well. You may need to go to your parents and ask them to forgive you for the attitudes you have held towards them. Make sure that you only ask forgiveness for your sin and don't try to remind them of theirs! You may say, "God has helped me to realize that I have not been respecting your authority properly in my life. I ask you to

forgive me and I will do my best to respond properly in the future.” Be specific. If there are certain areas that you can give as examples of your wrong response it will help.

### **3. Return**

The final step is to return to God’s plan for authority. This step is to live a changed life. It is to recognize God’s plan for authority in your life and to begin to walk under it and to experience God’s blessing in your life. It is to change your way of speaking about authority. It means that you willingly ask for advice. It means that you are willing to be held accountable for your actions.

### **Commitment**

As we end this study it is time for you to make a serious commitment to God and to yourself. Carefully read the following statement and then say it to yourself if you are willing to make the commitment. (It will be helpful if you name specific individuals in authority over you instead of saying “at home”.)

## Commitment Form

“I recognize that God has placed the following persons in authority over me: (put at least one name under each category)

**Home**

**Church**

**Government**

**Work/School**

“Today I willingly place myself under these authorities God has established in my life. I will trust God to use that authority to shape my life. Where I have been walking in rebellion against authority I will seek forgiveness and begin walking in a new relationship. I will appeal to authority when asked to do something wrong and trust God to guide the direction of my authority.”

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Prayer of commitment

“Amen”

Notes: