

A MAN AND HIS
COUNTRY

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DEDICATION

*To the patriotic men and women
of the United States military forces
who secure the freedom and liberties
that Americans so abundantly enjoy.
Thank you for serving!*

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PREFACE

I WROTE most of this book while deployed with the 42nd Infantry Division, United States Army, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was over six thousand miles from home and family. Why was I there? In one word: Patriotism! Yes, I love my country, and I have personal convictions regarding my responsibilities as a citizen.

Frankly, all Christians have a Biblical mandate to formulate a system of personal and political beliefs based upon the Word of God. It seems, however, that few issues generate heat, cause arguments, and divide culture more than politics. Yet if men raise their country's flag at a sporting event or hear a measure of their national anthem played, they will stand together to cheer for their great country. That's patriotism!

Remember *The Sound of Music*? When Austria faced Nazi domination, Captain Georg von Trapp's national patriotism determined his choices. We make choices too. But thank God, as Christians we have God's Word to guide us. My hope is that as you progress through this study, the Word of God will stir your heart and you will develop a Biblical grid of discernment to enable you to differentiate good practices from unbiblical ones that will diminish your testimony for Christ.

As men we must shoulder our responsibilities as citizens. I believe real men want to hear from God. The Word of God speaks clearly. So let's get started.

Pro Deo et Patria

For God and Country!

1

OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

*This study will help men understand
the sovereignty of God over citizens.*

GOD has an exciting plan for your life. Mark it down right now that this plan always functions perfectly within His sovereign will. You can trust Him. He never makes mistakes; He will never lead you where He cannot keep you. And all along the way our wonderful God protects and provides for those who live by faith, totally surrendered to His revealed will (Romans 8:28, 29).

Americans are citizens of a great country. We look back proudly at a rich heritage of Judeo-Christian influence. Those from other countries may not have a similar heritage or enjoy the same privileges as Americans. But no matter where we come from, we can trust God. He has a plan for each life, and He is in control.

The Need for Submission

Divine sovereignty is the authority and control of God over every sphere of life. For His own purposes, God has delegated authority to several human institutions. From our earthly perspective these institutions may seem autonomous and independent of divine control, but don't believe it. God is in control, and He instructs us in His Word to submit to these authorities as we submit to Him.

1. What four human institutions have God-given authority?

See Colossians 3:18—4:1; Acts 20:28; Romans 13:1.

The Word of God is clear: Those who resist the authorities ordained by God are also resisting God Himself (Romans 13:2). God calls Christians to live surrendered lives. Those who yield to those in authority over them have the best opportunity to testify of their trust in the sovereignty of God and His ultimate blessing on their lives.

Perhaps history has a lesson for us. At the conclusion of World War II, an agreement was signed on the deck of the *USS Missouri*. General Douglas MacArthur, Commander in the Southwest Pacific and Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, signed the agreement on behalf of America. The Instrument of Surrender validated the unconditional surrender of Japan to the United States and her allies; Japan was under new management. The United States financed and assisted in rebuilding Japan. Although broken in defeat, Japan was lifted up and reestablished as a healthy nation.

2. Read Ephesians 4:1–10. What is the parallel between what the United States did for Japan and what God does for those who surrender their wills to Him?

We will look briefly at three areas of God-given authority and then more closely at the fourth. God is most highly honored and glorified by believers when they respect His sovereignty at home, in church, at work, and in society. Of course, our ultimate goal is to honor Him in all areas of life.

Family Authority

God has set up family authority so that the husband and the wife have balanced responsibilities. First, the husband and wife are to submit to one another; thus they demonstrate their mutual respect for God and His delegated authority in their marriage (Ephesians 5:21). For example, while traveling, husbands who do not recognize and accept the wisdom of their wives are doomed to miss interstate exits and to travel unnecessary highway miles. Second, wives are to submit to their husbands. God considers such submission as service rendered “in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18; see also Ephesians 5:22).

Submission does not imply inferiority. Admit it: most women have a God-given, built-in GPS (Global Positioning Satellite). A wise husband listens to his wife and considers her input before making navigation decisions. However, a wife’s submission to her husband means that she recognizes his authority and responds to him as the head of the home and highway—rather than nagging about the past four missed exits! A wise husband eventually learns, even if not quickly, to respect and listen to the submissive and respectful wife. (For specifics about the husband’s leadership in the home, read *Men at Home*, RBP5318.)

3. Read Ephesians 5:23–29. What is the model for the authority of the husband?

4. How does a husband express a sense of honor for his wife?

Church Authority

Of these three—family, church, and employer—we most easily see the authority of the church as an extension of the authority of God. The church is His place; Christ is the declared Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). He is the Chief Shepherd of the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1–4).

Consider the honor normally given to the pastor as undershepherd. The relationship between Chief Shepherd and undershepherd is designed to demonstrate respect for the authority of the church and the sovereignty of God—first to the invisible Christ and second to the visible pastor (1 Timothy 5:17, 18; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1–4). (For specifics, read *Men at Church*, RBP5300.)

5. How do churches show respect for their pastors?

6. Read 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and 5:17–19 and Hebrews 13:17.

Why should churches give high honor to their pastors?

7. How can a church demonstrate submission to Christ?

Employer Authority

Like the husband in the home and the pastor in the church, the employer has God-given authority (Colossians 3:22—4:1). How a Christian responds to that authority is a reflection of his relationship with Jesus Christ. A good work ethic is primarily a response by which a believer, as a servant of God, demonstrates the ethical behavior of a transformed life: obedience rather than disobedience, corporate-interest rather than self-interest, and self-initiative rather than listlessness. A servant makes an effort to work rather than to escape work. (For specifics about a man's responsibility on the job, read *Men at Work*, RBP5317.)

8. Why should a Christian work more diligently than a non-Christian? (See Colossians 3:23.)

9. Where will all Christians receive their true employment benefits? (See Colossians 3:24.)

Civil Authority

Civil responsibility is the fourth area in which believers have an opportunity to demonstrate their belief in and respect for God's authority.

The letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans contains the Bible's most lengthy passage and detailed discussion on the subject of the relationship between a Christian and his government and civic rulers. Romans 13:2–7 reflects the well-known saying of Jesus, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

In Paul's day Rome was the imperial capital and center of the civil government of the Roman Empire. Paul exhorted the Roman Christians, who were citizens of both Rome and the kingdom of God, about three principles: (1) Everyone must submit to governing authorities because such authorities are established by God. (2) Those who rebel against the authority are rebelling against what God has instituted; their rebellion will bring divine judgment. (3) Those who obey do not need to fear authorities and may, in fact, be commended by them.

Note the *inclusive nature* of this authority, even over Christians: *every* soul (no deferments) is expected to be subject to the government. Rationale: no authority exists apart from God, and all authorities are appointed by God (Romans 13:1).

Note the *reason* for this respect for authority: invariably the conduct of a believer is linked to his beliefs. Thus we either honor or dishonor the Lord by our behavior and our respect for authority. Remember also that God commissions those in authority to punish evil men and to honor good men (1 Peter 2:13, 14).

10. Why would being punished for doing evil be a double embarrassment for a Christian?

Note the *attitude* of this respect for authority: submission to authority requires complete obedience—an emotional preparation to do what is right, in the right manner, with the right tone of voice, with the right body language, and with the right communication (Titus 3:1, 2). Our attitude is not to be like that of the disciplined boy who sits in the corner and thinks, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside!" Our attitudes are always known by God,

Who hears our thoughts, perceives our attitudes, and records our actions. God always honors humility.

Notice the *twofold result* of failure to show respect for human authority, as recorded in Romans 13:1 and 2. You resist the ordinances of God, and you bring judgment upon yourself.

It is human nature to shift blame for wrongdoing. Blaming someone else for our wrongdoing does not remove guilt, however. Wrong behavior has consequences. Resisting civil authority ultimately brings judgment. The police officer issuing the speeding ticket does not judge the offender; the law of the land does that. The offender brings the judgment and, ultimately, the penalty upon himself because he has broken the law.

I work in a prison where inmates returning from parole often describe the situation this way: “My parole officer violated me!” When this jailhouse language is interpreted, the statement means, “My parole officer is guilty of putting me here. It’s his fault—not mine. I didn’t do anything wrong!” Shifting blame is standard operating procedure for many, if not all of us.

11. How can a Christian explain to his children the authority and duty of the officer who gives him a speeding ticket?

Most citizens do not fear the police, because they know that the objective of the police is not to harass law-abiding citizens. However, those who break the law should fear apprehension and the penalty for breaking the law (Romans 13:3).

12. Is the use of a radar detector in the car an ethical option for the believer? Explain.

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Notice the *proper title* of rulers, or human authority figures (Romans 13:4). They are the “ministers” of God toward us for good. These ministers of God, who have the potential for wrath against evil men, will judge evil behavior. The members of our state and local police forces are “ministers of God” and are not to be called lesser names.

13. Read 1 Peter 2:13–17.

a. Why do we submit ourselves to civil authority (vv. 13–15)?

b. What rationale is ultimately behind this command (vv. 15–17)?

God has delegated authority in our families, our churches, our places of employment, and our country. This God-given structure is best for all men.