

As we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18), his messengers clearly call us to develop a healthy, God-centered respect for authority. No doubt, as Peter and the other apostles proclaimed, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 4:17-20; 5:27-29). But let’s focus in on what the same apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:13-25:

Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the

emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

Why? Why would the Holy Spirit lead Peter to tell disciples of Jesus to live with such respect, even for unjust masters and ungodly emperors? Listen to his explanation:

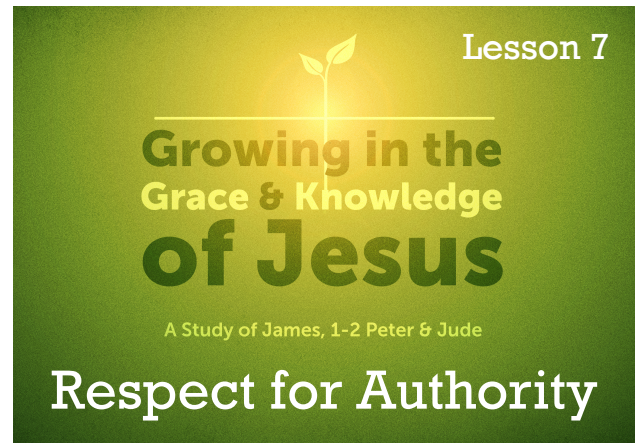
For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The world is full of far too many people who “reject authority” (Jude 8), but Christians are to be different, “for the Lord’s sake.” We are his servants and he calls us to “honor everyone.”

James makes that practical for us (3:1-12) when he warns that our tongues are “a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (3:9-10)

No, as wives are encouraged in 1 Peter 3:2, we all need to be examples of “respectful and pure conduct” and that begins with healthy, God-centered respect for authority. **Let’s talk about it...**



For Class & Family Discussion:

- “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution” (1 Pet 2:13). Peter gave a variety of examples for his first-century audience. What sort of human institutions would apply to us today? In your own words, what will it mean to “be subject” to them?
- How can we know when it’s time to draw a line and say with Peter and the other apostles, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)? Can you think of some examples of when we might be put in that sort of a difficult situation?
- What’s the difference between that and Jude’s warning against following along with people who “reject authority” (Jude 8)?
- How can we—“by doing good”—possibly “put to silence the ignorance of foolish people” (1 Pet 2:15) when we model a healthy, God-centered respect for authority?
- In what way is it “a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly” (1 Pet 2:18)?
- Let’s revisit James 3 and zero in on this practical area of application:
 - Why the warning to teachers (3:1)?
 - What point is James making in 3:2-5?
 - In what ways can our tongues “set on fire the entire course of life” (3:6)?
 - If you were going to summarize or rephrase what James is communicating in 3:7-12, how would you do it?
- In summary, if I have a healthy, God-centered respect for authority...