

Respecting Authority – A Basic Principle

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In every system there is a basic, nucleus principle that determines the spirit and operation of the whole. In God's plan for man, the basic principle is respect for and obedience to appropriate authority. Ours is a time in which authority is being repudiated and mocked at every level. There is a desperate need for the importance of authority to be re-emphasized, lest civilization be reduced to complete chaos.

God's authority is ultimate. He created the universe, sustains it by his power and will finally destroy it (Rev.4:11; Acts 17:28; 2 Pet. 3:10-11). God presently rules and reigns over all through Christ (Acts 2:34-36; 1 Cor.15:24-26). From the beginning of man's existence, God has required man's obedience and has labeled anything short of obedience "sin" (1 John 3:4; 5:17). God exercises his authority over all men in this age through his inspired Word, the New Testament (John 12:48; 2 John 9).

God's authority must be respected in his church. The New Testament is a written record of the oral teachings of the inspired apostles and preachers of the first century. The repeated warnings therein against departing from the healthful teaching of the Gospel are a clear call to keep the church as God made it by respecting his authority. He has delegated authority in the local church to elders who are shepherds and overseers of our souls to help us live within his authority (Acts 20:28).

God teaches respect for civil authority. Human government is ordained of God and must be obeyed (Mat. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). The one exception is where the Law of God conflicts with civil authority (Acts 5:29).

God teaches respect for authority in the home. He made man the head of woman and the husband head of the wife (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-23). It is right for children to respect and obey their parents (Eph. 6:1-2). Respect for authority must be learned during a child's formative years at home.

God teaches respect for authority at work. The servant (employee) must be obedient to his or her master (employer), not merely with eye-service (Eph. 6:5-6). Our world would be almost perfect if all men honored duly constituted authority.

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