

Celebrating God at Work and School, Part 2 | Follow and Lead

I. Our Responsibility to Follow

- **We must follow our authority in obedience.**
 - The very first command to those under authority is to “be obedient.
 - In the event that a legitimate authority is requiring you to do an otherwise Christ-honoring thing, then you must submit. And it doesn’t matter if the authority is a decent person or if they communicate the command in a nice way.
 - Our obedience is not contingent on liking the authority or liking how they lead.
- **We must follow our authority in reverence.**
 - The passage says that we need to obey our earthly masters with fear and trembling. This phrase is only used five times in the New Testament. Once is here, one of the occasions refers to actual fear, and the other three refer specifically to our response to God, His men, and His salvation.
 - Yes, God is commanding here that we fear our authorities in the same way we are to fear God.
 - To reverence is to honor and respect. To revere is to show devoted deferential honor, and to regard someone worthy of honor. Again, this points us back to the fact that mere external “following the rules” is not enough to please the Lord. We need to give honor to people. We need to respect our authorities.
 - The problem is that we often argue that the authority hasn’t “earned” our respect. Again, this is a big concept that would require a thorough understanding of what the Bible teaches about respect. But let me say this, to respect someone is to love them. To love them is to want and work toward God’s best interest in their lives. And God commands that we love even our enemies.
 - You don’t have an excuse to disrespect someone who you don’t think it worthy of your respect. You don’t have to want to be like them, you don’t even necessarily have to enjoy being around them, but you do have to love them . . . and that is respecting and honoring them.
- **We must follow our authority with sincerity.**
 - II Corinthians 8:1-2, 11:3
 - Paul tells that we must have sincerity of heart. The word “heart” is referring to the core of our being, our spirit. This tells us again that this must not be a superficial thing. And the word “sincerity” refers to simplicity and liberality. Both of these concepts should be understood in the idea of sincerity.
 - As we follow our authorities, we do so in a straightforward, uncomplicated, and generous way. We don’t get involved in the corporate politics, we don’t appear to have our authorities’ backs when we’re around them and then shun them when we’re not. Our obedience and reverence is sincere. It’s genuine. It’s uncomplicated, blameless, and real.
- **We must follow our earthly authority just as we are to follow Christ.**
 - You need to look up at your awful, hateful teacher and recognize that as you obey her and submit to her and respect her — and even love her — you are submitting to and respecting and loving God. And when you refuse to obey and submit and love her, you’re actually refusing to obey and submit to and love God.
 - When we were yet sinners, incapable of loving Him, living as His sworn enemies, He sacrificed Himself to purchase our redemption and did all the work necessary to enter into a covenant relationship with us whereby He receives absolutely nothing He needs and we receive everything we don’t deserve.

- So, when I recognize that one of the best ways to honor my great God is to show His love to others in my life, it makes it so much easier to love the unlovely
- It doesn't really matter what your authority thinks of you or how they treat you because your main goal is to glorify God and to receive the blessing of pleasing Him. And that's what verse 8 says: *"Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."*
- **We are to follow our authorities with good will.**
 - This is the only time in the New Testament that the word translated "good will" is used. But even though we don't have a ton of other uses in the Bible, we know that the word refers to benevolence. And the interesting thing about this Greek word and our English word for benevolence is that both of them carry an underlying understanding that we owe people this good will. It's not just something we do; it's something we have to do.
- **Our following is to be characterized by goodness.**
 - We're going to obey in a reverential, sincere way as an act of worship to God, our behavior will easily be categorized as Christ-honoring righteousness.

II. Our Responsibility to Lead

- **Those in authority are required to do all of the exact same things the employees and students are supposed to do.**
 - They too must sincerely obey God, respect the people they lead, and show the righteousness that they owe to those they lead, and they must do all of this as an act of worship to God.
 - So, if you are in a position of authority at work or at school (or anywhere for that matter), you are not allowed to be a tyrant. You must submit to God and follow in Christ's example of truthful, loving, righteous, servant-leadership.
- **The authority is not allowed to threaten those they lead.**
 - Leviticus 25:43
 - We as leaders won't sin against God.
 - We as followers won't accuse our authorities of doing something they're not.
 - Leaders are not to lead by terror tactics, they are to lead by truth and love.
 - On the other hand — it is our responsibility as Followers to submit regardless of whether or not our authorities are being harsh or threatening. But we must also not wrongly assume that severe treatment or high expectations are inappropriate simply because we believe that they are. We must let the Bible be our guide.
- **Followers are supposed to be Leaders.**
 - Matthew 5:6
 - When we do what's right, when we Follow as we should, when we submit to God, we are Leading by example.
 - Sure, we may not have the authority to demand that people do what we say, but we can set the example of how we're all to live.
 - In fact, by Following the way God commands, we are Leading. We're Following Christ and our example winsomely invites others to follow our Lead as we follow our Leader. This is being salt and light. So, though it is desperately important that we use our time on this earth to grow in our sanctification as an act of worship to God, the main reason we're still here is to be a salt and light. That is exactly how God expects you to Lead even when you're not the boss. Both your bosses and fellow coworkers or students should see your good words — your obedient Following — and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven.