

The Honor of God: Give Honor to Whom Honor is Due

The Honor of God
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Good morning. This morning we're going to finish our study on "The Honor of God" and I was almost tempted just to not do this last one because I'm anxious to get back into John, but I took a step back and I was like, no, this, what we're going to talk about today is such an important discussion and issue in the New Testament that it's something that we must tackle if we are going to talk about the honor of God, and what we're going to talk about is honoring the various authorities that God has placed over us in government, the authorities that God has placed over us in government.

Now when I say the word government, what do you think of? Most people think of the state, and sadly many Christians have been led astray here to think that when we talk about government that's all we're talking about, but God has actually established multiple forms and levels of government and as a believer you need to know what these forms are. Let me just give these to you and then we're going to talk about how to honor the authorities in each of these. But the first is actually self-government. Self-government, that God has created every person to be accountable to him as image-bearers of God, that's Genesis 1:27 and 28. This means that you are naturally endowed with a conscience with the law written on your heart. Romans 2:15, Paul says, "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." One theologian, Gary Demar, said, "Self-government is synonymous with self-control. A self-governed individual is someone who can regulate his attitudes and actions without the need for external coercion."

America was established with the expectation of the self-government of the individual, in fact, John Adams said our Constitution wouldn't work if we weren't self-governed. What that means is that every single person has a responsibility to live their lives accountable to the living God. Every single person has a responsibility to trust Christ, believe the gospel for the forgiveness of sins because one day each and every person as an individual will stand before the living Christ on the last day and will have to give an account for their life, and only if you're clothed in the blood and the righteousness of Christ will you be able to stand on that day. It's an individual exercise. You don't get saved by being part of this church, being an American, or being in this community. You're saved by faith and faith alone. Paul said, Acts 17:30, he said, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

So you as an individual are ultimately accountable to God and that's self-government. The second form of government, this is really important that you understand this, is family government. Family government. The family consists of a husband who God calls the head of the family, and a wife who is his helpmate and companion, and their children over which both the father and the mother exercise authority. Almost immediately after creating mankind as accountable creatures to God, God instituted the government of the family. Listen, the family comes before the state. That's an important order to note. Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." One family. When questioned about this, Jesus reiterated this point, Matthew 19:4, Jesus said, "Have you not read," referring to Genesis 2, "that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

So is the family man's idea or God's idea? God's idea, what God has joined together. Every marriage that takes place is a covenant that is taking place with God Almighty, that when you get married, you are making a covenant with the person you are marrying and a covenant before God and that's why it's a public event and the people come, because they act as witnesses to the reality of this covenant that you're making before God with this individual.

The family, just like the individual, this is really important, is to function according to God's moral law. The family, the husband, the mother, are to submit to the moral law of God and the parents, the father and the mother, are responsible for the training and the education of the children. The family is responsible for the discipline of the children and the family is responsible for the sustainment of personal property. That's why when you die the state should not get your property. Who gets your property? Your children do. Remember in Israel if you didn't have a son, you would need a redeemer, right? And then the redeemer would receive that property and the property would stay in the family. Our founding fathers understood property rights as very important to sustain individual rights and the rights of families.

What's going on right now in our country is essentially family rights are being bulldozed. They're being bulldozed, and the reason why is because the family, people, secularists know if they can get rid of the family, then they can completely take over ideologically because it's Christian families that are training little people to be the future Christians of tomorrow. So here's how this is happening. It's happening two ways. 1. It's happening through the redefinition of the family, redefined, that it's not founded between one man and one woman, it's all sorts of things. That's obvious. That's surrounding you in the news everyday. The other way that the family is being bulldozed is the undermining of the family's authority in the lives of their children.

So this is an issue that's come up in Washington state. Washington state has a policy right now that teachers do not have to tell parents if their child has undergone a gender transition. Did you all know this? I was reading an article in "First Things" and Carl Trueman said, "Washington State's policy is a reminder of how deeply government agencies have bought into trans ideology, and how they are using it to drive a wedge between parents and children. By the state's own philosophy, the child is the gender he or she claims to be. So the state holds that the child defines who he truly is, but that the child's parents have no right to know." He says, "That is disturbing in the extreme."

And the reason why this is happening and you're seeing people say things like children belong to the state, I don't know if you've heard that, is because people have lost any foundation of family government, that God has ordained parents to instruct their children, to discipline their children, to bring up their children. Education is not a responsibility of the state in the Bible, it's a responsibility of the parents. But most in our country, all they know in terms of government is state. We've become statist and we've lost sight of both individual government and family government.

So that leads, third, to civil government, and by this we mean state government. And you see the state established in Genesis 10, and when you read Genesis 10, that's when you see Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, disperse on the earth. That chapter is sometimes referred to as the Table of Nations and every nation on the face of the earth, what you see is established by God. God rules over each of the nations. Psalm 86:9 says, "All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name."

So the state is to function, again just like the family, just like the individual, according to God's moral law. It should institute laws that honor the Lord and are in accordance with his word. Noah Webster, remember him from Webster's Dictionary said, "The moral principles and precepts contained in the scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible."

As such the state is primarily, and we'll see this momentarily when we look at Romans 13, but the state is primarily responsible for two things: one is the protection and defense

of its citizens; and two, the punishment of evil and the advancement of good. The state in the Bible is not responsible for educating children. The state is not responsible for caring for the elderly, that's the church's responsibility. Nor is the state responsible for population control. But because America is in the process of rejecting God, people are making the state God. The state has become in most people's minds the highest authority, the highest good. We're building right now our own Tower of Babel where we can make our own way, engineer our way up, but God, I promise you, will disperse, God will bring judgment. You cannot live apart from this book. You can't do it. Every society in history has tried it and you know what happens with every society just like Rome? They fall apart from the inside. It wasn't the Vandals and the Goths who destroyed Rome, it was Rome itself because they abandoned God's word.

Then fourth, is church government or you could say ecclesiastical government. You might not realize this, but the church is its own government. Jesus established the church, Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." As such, the church has its own government and authority. It used to be that government leaders feared the authority of the church. I remember reading the story of Henry IV, Emperor Henry, and how he went to Pope Gregory's castle outside Tuscany and knelt down in the snow and begged for forgiveness for three days that he might not be excommunicated. Used to be that government leaders feared the authority of the church and its government. Ultimately, as the Reformers argued, the church is not to be governed by one man, a Pope, but by Christ, the chief Shepherd, and according to the word of God.

The church's responsibility is to affirm who is and who is not part of the kingdom of God, and that's why we have church membership. Church membership isn't just saying, you know, I'm part of this group, church membership is a declaration that we believe that you're actually a Christian. That's what church membership is. That's why we have you go through the membership class and Starting Point, and meet with the pastor; that's because we're trying to validate and make sure that you're actually a Christian. So if you're a member of this church, it means that we have placed that stamp on you that we believe that you are actually part of the kingdom of God. That's one of our responsibilities. We're also responsible for maintaining sound doctrine. We're responsible for advancing Christ's mission, the Great Commission, we talked about that last week. And we're responsible for the welfare of our poor members. We're responsible. The church is. Not the state. If there's somebody in need in our congregation, we're going to meet those needs. We're not going to say go to the state and try and get help there. We're going to be the hands and feet and the body of Christ and come around people, and by the way, this church does that. This church does that as a New Testament church. If there is a need, people will come around and meet that need.

So what you see in the Bible is that God has established different governments, different institutions, and all of these institutions are under God. Are under God. I put a diagram in your notes, you see, this, they're all under God, and then they're all to be regulated by God's word. Now we have a responsibility to obey each of the leaders in these governments, but we are only to submit to each institution and each government insofar

as we can underneath the word of God. That that is such an important concept for you to understand because it means that no government's authority is unlimited besides God's; that if I tell you to do something that's contrary to the word of God, you must obey Christ rather than men. If your parents ask you to do something that violates the word of God, you must obey Christ rather than men. And if the government asks you to do something that violates the word of God, you must obey Christ rather than men. God is God and he governs through his word, so that's such an important principle to understand, but all that being said, one of the distinguishing qualities of the believer is that we honor the authorities that God has given in these institutions and in these governments, and by honoring, and we're just going to walk through this very quickly, our parents, by honoring the government leaders that are over us, by honoring the elders, what you're doing is in the word of God in Christ, you're actually giving honor to God. It's a very tangible and practical way for you to show the heaviness and the weightiness of God upon your life.

Now I am going to spend the most time on family government because I think it's the most misunderstood and the most neglected. So let's talk about family government. Right now, I want you to turn to Ephesians 6 and I want you to look at Ephesians 6:2 and these instructions that Paul gives. Paul says, "Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise)," he's quoting the 10 Commandments and specifically the fifth commandment, "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." That word "honor" means "to respect; to deference; to give obedience to your parents' commands." It means to specifically in the Old Testament, it meant to take care of your parents when they were older, to provide financially for them. One of the marks of a godly person is that they, as much as they can, show honor to their parents and the ungodly, on the flipside, dishonors their parents. Paul says, in 1 Timothy 1:9, he said the lawless strike their fathers and mothers.

Honor is shown through obedience. One of the ways that we honor our parents is by obeying them and here's why this is important: the role of the parents is not to be the friend of the child. Both the father and the mother are to give the children instruction and training so that the children come to fear God and know how to function as individuals before God. Proverbs 1:8 says, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck." Likewise, you see in verse 4 here, next verse he says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

So the parent stands, a little kid does not understand who God is, right? A little kid is figuring things out in the world, but the parent stands in the place of the Lord giving instruction to the child so that the child can begin to understand what it means to function in this world as a child of God. It's a very important function that parents play and we can't take that function flippantly. We're to be parents to our children, and that's why, look at verse 1, Paul gives this instruction, he says, "Children, obey your parents," as much as you can, "in the Lord," that's the qualifier, "in the Lord, for this is right."

It is a good and right thing for children to obey their parents and this is what, if you're a parent, this is the number one thing that you need to teach your child is obedience. This is the first verse that we have our children memorize, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." And we tell our children that this obedience needs to be three things. When we say, you know, take your shoes off, it needs to be immediately, it needs to be cheerfully, and it needs to be done completely. So it's not a halfway obedience. It's a happy obedience, and it's an immediate obedience, and that's what God expects of us as well. And this is something that you are going to have to teach your children, your grandchildren, but it's important because you as a parent, a grandparent, have this huge responsibility of teaching kids how to fear the Lord and how to function in society as individuals. That's your responsibility.

I remember when I was with my, my grandpa Castleberry, Charles Castleberry, my father was killed so my grandpa played just a massive influence in my life and whenever I was with him, it was just, it was the little things. It was, "Grant, stand up straight and tuck in your shirt." All the time, he would tell that not just to me. One time I was at a Christian bookstore and he told that to the clerk. He said, "Tuck in your shirt," and the clerk starts tucking his shirt. One time I was playing a football game and my jersey had come untucked from my pants and I hear, "Grant, tuck in your jersey." So on the football field, tucking in my shirt.

So my grandfather died last year, and I was talking to my uncle Cary and he's in his 60s, very successful man in San Antonio, and he was telling me this story. He said that grandpa came to visit him and was going to church with him one morning and Cary comes out at the car and he said, "I was wearing khakis and a white button-down shirt," and he gets in the car and my grandpa Castleberry looks at him and goes, "Cary, are you the chairman of the deacons at your church?" He said, "Yes, sir, I am." And he said, "Cary, are you dressed like the chairman of the deacons at your church?" And I asked Cary, "Well, what did you do?" You know?, I mean, he's in his 60s. He said, "Well, I went back inside and I put on a coat and tie."

Now obviously that's a more extreme example, but you get the picture that these relationships stay with us and obedience to our parents, as much as we can in the Lord, in Christ, Paul says, is important. It's very important. Jesus, the eternal Son of God obeyed his parents. Luke 2:51, Luke records, "And Jesus went down with them, "Mary and Joseph," and came to Nazareth, and was submissive to them, and his mother treasured up all these things in her heart."

Another way that we demonstrate honor to our parents, God says, is to care for our parents when they are older. Jot down 1 Timothy 5:4, 1 Timothy 5:4. Paul says, "if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household," and listen to this, "to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God." Paul's expectation was before the church would start taking care of a widow or an elderly person, that their own children and grandchildren would care for that widow or elderly person. I think it's personally humorous that he says "make some return to your parents." You can't possibly make all the return. You know this. You can't make

all the return to your parents for what they've done in bringing you into the world and providing for them, but you can make some return. That's why I often remind my son, Charles, that he's my retirement plan, that he has an obligation to make some return.

This is listen, this is a very important thing to Jesus, to the apostles. I want to show you this. I want you to turn to the left to Mark 7. Mark 7. This is something that our culture has really lost sight of but it's something that it was so important to our Lord and really to how the Old Testament saints functioned in the family. I want you to look at verse 5. There was a question about hand washing and what the Pharisees and scribes had done is they had instituted a policy where they said that everybody had to wash their hands ceremonially before and after they ate, whereas really the Old Testament law only prescribed the priests to do this, and you can read about that in Exodus 30:18. But if you look at verse 5, it says, "And the Pharisees and the scribes asked [Jesus], 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?'" Well, they're not obeying, the disciples aren't having to obey a specific law, they're talking about, notice, the tradition of the scribes, the tradition of the Pharisees, the elders. And Jesus, look what he says, he says, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

So what they had done is they had substituted their own religion, their own laws in the place of the word of God. Remember what we talked about earlier? Who do we obey? The word, we obey God. We're not under the commandments of men. And look at Jesus' response. He says, verse 9, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God," so you reject the commandment of God, "in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said," and he now quotes the fifth commandment, "'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, 'Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban,'" Corban is literally a translated Hebrew word that means money that is vowed to God, and what the Pharisees had said is, "Look, if you vow money to God, then you really don't have to give any money to your parents. You don't have to take care of your parents if you've vowed this to the Lord." Jesus says, verse 12, "then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother."

So this whole tradition of vowing this money to God, Jesus says, look at verse 13, "makes void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do." So this is an example of the way that the Pharisees had operated; essentially the Pharisees allowed and encouraged the honor that the children owed their parents, this is the financial help that the children were to give their parents, to instead be given to the temple.

Now, why is this commandment, this was the question I was asking this week, why is this commandment so important? Why does Jesus emphasize this with the Pharisees? Why does Paul reiterate it in Ephesians 6? Paul even reiterates the promise that is given that you may live long in the land. The reason why this commandment is important, the fifth commandment of honoring father and mother, is because this commandment is the link in

the axis to the first four commands going vertically up, and then it's the link and the axis to the final five commands in honoring our fellow neighbors, our fellow man. The first four commands are about our relationship with God, right? "Do not have any other God before me. No graven images. Do not take God's name in vain. Honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy." What's next? "Honor your father and mother." When you learn to honor your father and mother as a Hebrew, what you were learning is to honor God. You were learning to honor God because what were the parents instructed to teach their children? How to honor God. So when the promise is given that you may live long in the land, it's not simply given on the basis of the fact that you were nice to your parents, the reason why the promise was given that you would live long in the land is because it was assumed that if you honored your father and mother, who else were you honoring? God. And if you were honoring God, then you were keeping his commands and then you would live long in the land.

Now, why does honoring father and mother come before thou shalt not commit murder, and adultery, and stealing, and lying, and coveting? Why? Because your parents teach you not to do those things. You see how it's the hinge? The fifth commandment's the hinge. That's why it's so important in the structure of the 10 Commandments. The child who honors their parents puts themselves in the path of God's blessing and listen, this is Paul's point in Ephesians 6, this is the point Moses is making when he delivers the 10 Commandments: the nation which has children that honor their parents puts themselves in the path of God's blessing. The nation which has children which honors their parents, puts themselves in the path of God's blessing.

So that's family government. Next, I want to show you civil government and I want you to turn to the book of Romans 13. Romans 13. In addition to honoring our parents, we are also to honor the governing authorities that God has placed over us. I want you to look at verse 7 of Romans 13, and then we're going to come back and look at the previous six verses, but Paul says, "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed." So we are to have a sense of respect and a sense of honor for everyone that God has put in authority over us, and we need to remember that, especially when we're under a President that we probably don't appreciate; that there's a certain respect and honor that you are to give because of the office a person holds.

I was in the Marine Corp and a high-ranking officer came into the room. You know what if you've been in the service, what happens? Somebody calls, "Attention on deck." What happens, everybody stands up, everybody is sitting down, everybody stands up, stands up at attention. It doesn't matter if you like that officer or not, you're calling attention because of the rank they hold. When you meet a higher-ranking officer, you automatically salute. You're saluting the office. You're paying respect to the office. And we, as believers, need to remember that, that whoever is in charge, the President, he's the Commander in Chief, and there's a certain amount of respect and decorum that as believers we need to pay that office.

We are to pray, Paul says, for those in authority. 1 Timothy 2 he says, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." And then in addition to those things, respect and prayer, look what else Paul says in verse 1. Look at verse 1, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities." That means obey them. "For there is no," listen to this, "For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." So every authority in government that's placed over you, police, mayors, all these people, nothing happens outside the hand of the providence of God. "Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment."

Now, verse 3 is very important, okay, because it qualifies the authority that a government leader has. Does a government leader have all-out authority over your life? Well, look at verse 3, "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval." There's an expectation that a government leader is to promote what is good according to God's law and punish what is evil according to God's law.

Samuel Rutherford wrote a book called "Lex Rex," and that means that the law is king, and that's something that's very important to remember, that God's law is king over every government leader, and as long as the government leader is saying this is right, and that's in line with God's law, then we must obey that. But if a government leader says bow down to this statue, no matter how hot I turn the furnace, what are you to do? We must obey God rather than men. Our highest allegiance is to the Lord.

Now look what he says, verse 4, "for he is God's servant," literally God's deacon, "for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain." So the government has the responsibility to bring judgment and punishment temporally on those that do evil. "For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer." God expects punishment for wrongs done, for actual justice to be carried out. God didn't design in the Old Testament a jail system. God designed a system of justice to be carried out. Prisons are not supposed to necessarily be places where you are rehabilitated. That's how our culture thinks of prisons. The justice system, their responsibility is not to rehabilitate people, their responsibilities to execute justice according as God, what he says, "God's servant." You are to carry out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. That your job. Your job isn't to go lenient on someone just because you like them, or they possibly had a difficult circumstance. You are to execute justice if God has put you in this position of government.

"Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience." There it is, that your conscience, you are to obey God, obey men as much as you can under God. "For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing."

So Christians should be known for those who honor those in authority, and we honor them with our respect, we honor them with our taxes, we honor them with our obedience. We honor them in all those things.

Now there's a couple points to think about. In this country, what is the highest authority? What's the highest authority in this country? It's the United States Constitution. Every single person in this country derives their power and authority ultimately from the people, but also underneath the Constitution. So if a leader, 1) is violating the law of God, and 2) violates the Constitution, what is your responsibility? Your responsibility is to obey the Constitution and that's why we have a court system where you challenge that law, and you say this law is unconstitutional and it actually disobeys the highest authority of the land, and then it goes through the court system, and then what could potentially happen? Then that law is struck down as unconstitutional.

You see, during the pandemic I heard so many Christians say, "Well, this guy said we needed to do this, so we need to do it." No, no, no. That guy could be violating the highest laws of the land. Just because a secular authority says jump through this hoop doesn't mean that you necessarily have to obey if he's violating higher laws. And that's an important thing for believers to understand, especially as the state is growing more and more, and I think out of the bounds of its jurisdiction, that in this country, by God's grace, if you're an American, the Constitution is the highest law in the land.

And our founding fathers understood this and that's why they instituted what is called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights that each individual has certain rights and those rights cannot be infringed upon by the state. This morning you're exercising one of them, what's that? The right of freedom of religion. It's not just freedom of worship. It's the right to express what you believe in this country, not just here but publicly. You have a right to defense, bear arms to defend your family. You have a right to personal property. You have a right to express your opinion in the press that the government should not be able to suppress those things. All of those things our founding fathers were so brilliant. They said, look, what they feared most was a government that stood upon the rights of individuals. And so as individuals, we need to keep going back under God and saying, "Look, under God we have the law of God and we have the Constitution and those are the benchmarks from which every ruler is to govern." Makes sense? Okay.

Third, and very quickly is church government, and this has just been, you know, if we've lost sight of family government, we've completely lost sight of church government, but this is something important for us to remember, that Christ established a church and his expectation was is within the church we are to give honor to all believers. All believers, Romans 12:10 says, "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." So you are to honor every single Christian, all your brothers and sisters in Christ, and then moreover instructions are given in the New Testament to honor the elders, the pastors that lead you.

So if you would, turn to the right to 1 Timothy, the book of 1 Timothy 5:17. Paul says, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who

labor in preaching and teaching." So we are to give honor to the elders, the pastors who lead well, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. He says in verse 18, "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" What Paul is talking about there is specifically, it's not just financial but it is specifically financial. He's saying, "Look, you are to give honor to the elders, specifically those who labor in preaching and teaching the word of God. You are to provide for them financially." And he uses this example of an ox treading grain, and they weren't allowed to muzzle the ox so that the ox could receive the fruit of its work, and that's the point Paul is making.

But I want you to notice that this honor, look how Paul links the honor of the elder to the word of God. What is the elder to lead with? Preaching and teaching the word of God. There are a lot of "pastors" that probably aren't deserving as of much honor because they have departed from God's word. So the amount of honor and obedience, and this is really important to get a hold of, that you give to any religious leader needs to be in accordance with the word of God.

Now I feel so honored in so many ways by the people of this church. You have no idea. I know Kenny feels the same way. Just yesterday one of our members came over and gave me a new coffee mug, a hand grenade coffee mug. You know, so I feel so honored in so many ways. You have no idea just how grateful I am to be your pastor and just the ways that y'all honor myself and Kenny and the other elders. It's really and this church is so healthy in that regard. But I think we all know that that honor is directly in accordance with the faithfulness to the word of God; that what you're really honoring is that you love the word and you love to submit your life to the word, and you want to come underneath the word, and so you're thankful that we teach God's word and strive to conform this church to God's word.

And that's the picture. Jot down Hebrews 13:7. The writer of Hebrews says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God." So remember the leaders who spoke to you the word of God. "Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." It's the word of God which is to be the instrument of the pastor and the elder. It's the word of God and only the word of God. If a pastor or elder tells you to do something that's not found in this book, don't do it. They don't have that authority to tell you to do that. I heard about a church in Dallas when I was pastoring there and they were having members basically submit budgets to their small groups and the church would try to tell families whether or not they could buy property or cars or things like that. That's not the church's jurisdiction. That's the family's jurisdiction. What I have the authority to tell you is what God's word says, and if your life isn't in line with God's word, then as a watchman on the wall, and as a shepherd of souls, I have a responsibility to tell you that. I do, but it has to be a chapter and verse. It can't just be my own opinion. And so that's why it's important for you to know your Bibles. America is the land of cults, it is. Every cult was invented here in America, and every cult started with a charismatic leader who said, "God told me this. God said this. God did this." And then a bunch of people who didn't know their Bibles followed them. That's the story of America unfortunately.

So know your Bibles and know the authority. There is a spiritual authority through the word of God. Peter says, 1 Peter 5:5. "Likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders." The writer of Hebrews, says, Hebrews 13:17, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account." So know that there is an authority with the pastor to bring the word of God to you, and that's a God-given authority that we exercise. But again, it's limited by the word of God. It's limited by the word of God.

So that's the various authorities that God has given in your life, church authorities, government authorities, family authorities, and then, of course, the authority that we each exercise to govern ourselves. And as we honor each of those authorities as much as we can under God, you will give great honor to the Lord and your life will go well. Children, listen to me, if you don't get anything else from today, children, listen: obey your parents. Grandchildren, listen: obey your grandparents. Are you listening? When they tell you to do something, listen, we're going to be watching you, immediately, completely cheerfully you obey because they're teaching you how to honor the Lord, alright?

Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you for the authorities that you've placed over us. We thank you, Lord for giving us these clear instructions that are just so basic, honor our father and mother, honor the leaders that are placed over us in government, honor the elders that keep watch over our souls. These are just basic instructions, Lord, and I pray that we would be a people that gives honor to you by following these instructions by giving honor to God and honoring the authorities that you have placed in our lives, and in so doing that we would live lives that radiate the glory and honor of God. And we ask all these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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