



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

SUBMISSION IS NOT FOR WIMPS • Eric Silverman

There are many things within Christianity that our culture would applaud. Character, honesty, deep relationships, and commitment to unity across racial boundaries, all get positive marks from non-Christians. Submission is a different story, though. If you are like most people in our culture, even the word brings a subtle but defiant clench deep in the pit of your stomach. It is a pity that the topic of submission is often discussed only in the context of marriage, because the problem in our culture is not that wives do not want to submit to husbands, but that no one wants to submit to anyone. The Bible has much to say about submission: to God (James 4:6-7), to political authorities (Romans 13:1-7), to church leadership (Heb 13:17), within marriage (Col 3:18), and even a general submissiveness of all Christians to one another (Eph 5:21).

How do Christians act in these other relationships where we are supposed to be submissive? When it comes to being submissive to church leadership, we're quite bad at it. So bad in fact, that there are now HUNDREDS of different denominations. Do we really believe that all of those splits were justified? On the personal level, how many of us are quick to switch churches because of relatively minor issues. Instead of praying for our Christian leaders, many of us spend more time complaining about them. Instead of submitting to them, we ignore or even oppose their instructions.

How do we treat those in political authority over us? The Bible is not difficult to decipher on this issue: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God ... Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Rom 13:1,7). Remember, these words were written in a society where most people had little or no say over who their leaders were. And many of those leaders persecuted Christians. They jailed, enslaved, tortured, and killed Christians. We have freedom and safety on a level that first century Christians could barely dream of. And yet, if someone gets elected that we disagree with, many of us treat them with massive disrespect. During election season, one very effective way to win is for the candidates to slander each other, to exaggerate the others flaws, and even to tell bold- faced lies. Even we as Christians tend to reward this behavior. We ought to pray more for our political leaders, and complain about them far less.

Before we go any further, it seems wise to discuss what submission is and isn't:

- Submission to human authority does not mean that we are never involved in the decision making process. In fact, respectfully communicating with our leaders about issues is an important part of the American political process.
- Submission does not mean that we follow human authority when it clearly involves sin. Just as the early disciples had to ignore the religious establishment's command to stop teaching about Jesus (Acts 6:27-32), there are times when following God requires rejecting sinful instructions by human authority.
- Submission does not mean that those who submit are less important, less intelligent, or less godly than those

to whom we are told to submit. Even Jesus was submissive to the plans of God the Father, “Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:6-9 NIV; see also Luke 22:39-44)

- Submission does mean that we have a strong tendency to defer to the judgement of the authority unless it involves obvious sin before God.
- In relationships where we are told to submit, the authority involved will have to answer to God for how they used their authority. (Hebrews 13:17)

The only absolute command to submit, is when we are commanded to submit to God “... God is opposed to the Proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit therefore to God...” (James 4:6-7 NASB). However, many of our