

Getting Along With Your Leaders

Session I: “Living Within Boundaries...and Liking It!”

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS MESSAGE, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO PURPOSE IN THEIR HEARTS TO CHEERFULLY SUBMIT TO THEIR AUTHORITIES.

Hints for teachers: Our purpose is to melt the hearts of our rebels and to guard others from choosing a rebellious path. You can’t accomplish this by simply proving that disobedience is wrong and destructive. Some rebels are so blinded that even the prospect of meeting a violent death holds a special allure.

Reflect on the various students in your group. **Some have a heart for God** but don’t realize that their faith should impact their relationship with their authorities. Expose these to the Scriptures below and they’ll respond. **Others deeply hate all authority.** Perhaps cold and selfish authority figures have colored their opinion of all authorities. These need more than a Bible lesson. They need to see you and other significant adults as examples of compassionate, sincere authorities. **Still others live in outright rebellion.** When they see a movie of a rebel like Jim Morrison, they don’t see a tragedy and a warning. They see a role model. They need more than the Word and a positive role model. They need the power of prayer to break through the lies of the enemy (II Corinthians 4:3,4). Ultimately our war is with principalities and powers that blind the eyes of our students (Ephesians 6:10ff). Without fervent prayer, our most diligent preparation pales before the power of the evil one. Fight spiritual battles with spiritual weapons and cry out to God to melt even the hardest hearts.

Introduction

Idea: Use a couple of clips from the movie, such as the first time we meet Marty’s mom and geeky dad, and a couple of encounters with the principal.

ILLUSTRATION: In Part One of the Back to the Future trilogy, Michael J. Fox plays Marty McFly, a cool and talented student who is surrounded by goofy authority figures. How many of you saw the movie? His dad is a geek who is controlled by Marty’s mom. His principal is a clueless disciplinarian who seems to enjoy reminding Marty that he’s a “slacker,” who, like his father, won’t amount to

anything.

How many of you think that this is typical of the way authority figures are presented in youth movies? What other movies or TV shows can you think of that present authority figures as either unsympathetic, clueless, or worse? (The principal in Matilda, Adam Sandler’s father in Big Daddy, Rug Rat’s Parents, parodies of presidents in Comedy Central, parents in Small Soldiers, etc.)

While the media often presents authority figures as hypocritical geeks who students delight in defying, the bible presents a totally different view. In fact, this will be so revolutionary to some of you that your initial gut reaction may be to turn this off. All I ask is that you allow God to speak to your heart through His Word.

PRAYER

I. Who Are Our Authorities?

BIBLE SEARCH: Divide into small groups, take these verses, and list some of the authorities that the Bible speaks of.

- **Employers** (I Peter 2:18, Colossians 3:22-24)
- **Governing Officials** (Romans 13:1ff, I Peter 2:13,14)
- **Parents** (Ephesians 6:1-3)
- **Church Leaders** (Hebrews 13:17, cr. I Cor. 16:15,16)
- **Jesus/God** (Matthew 7:21-23; cr. Philippians 2:9-11)

Heb. 13:17 – The Greek word for “submit” means literally to “yield,” or figuratively “to give way” or “submit to one’s authority.” (AG)

So if these are my authorities, how should I relate to them?

II. How Should I Relate to My Authorities?

A. Obey Them. (Romans 13:1-7; cr. Proverbs 21:1; Eph 6:1; Heb. 13:17)

Who will read Romans 13:1-7 for me?

“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. Consequently he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.”

Discussion: According to this verse, why should we obey? [1) God established authorities. Thus, rebels against authority are rebelling against God. 2) Rebels bring judgment and punishment upon themselves. 3) Rebels live in fear of authorities. 4) Authorities are God’s servants. 5) Rebels struggle with a bad conscience.]

Let’s look at a few of these reasons in more depth.

1 – Rebels are really defying *God*. (Romans 13:1,2; cr. Pr. 21:1)

“...he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted...”

Now some of you are thinking, “*Hold on now! Wait a minute!*” What are some of your problems with this teaching?

Objection: My authorities are not Christians.

Answer: Neither were Paul's and Peter's, but they still believed that God was in control.
(Romans 13:1ff., I Pet. 2:13-17)

Remember, governing authorities in New Testament times authorized Jesus' crucifixion, imprisoned Christians, beat them and killed them. When Paul wrote this passage in Romans, Nero was emperor. He was cruel, filled with lust, and vicious to the point of murder. (Alan F. Johnson) Yet, Paul wrote that God still works through these guys and we are to submit. *What are some ways that God can work, even through unspiritual authorities?*

ILLUSTRATION: *John's Non-Christian parents won't allow him to go to a Wednesday night youth event. But before you counsel Paul to defy his unspiritual parents, think of some other reasons that God may want Paul to stay home. (Get their input.) 1) Perhaps Paul is lazy and never completes his homework on time. His parents sense this problem and don't want him to use the group as an excuse to miss more assignments. 2) Perhaps Paul has been irresponsible with his daily chores. Until he shows more maturity, they don't want him out of the home.*

God is big enough to use our authorities, even if their motives are not spiritual.

Objection: But my authorities are unreasonable.

Answer: God can even work through unreasonable leaders. Sometimes, we are called to endure. (I Peter 2:18ff)

ILLUSTRATION: *We've all seen dogs that live in spacious fenced yards, but spend every waking minute scratching at the gate. They seem to think that real life is outside the gate, and are clueless as to why their master would lock them up. The master may love the dog very much, so much, in fact that he doesn't want the dog to step out into the busy street and become the hood ornament of a fast-moving diesel truck. But just like our animals, rather than having fun inside the spacious yard God has given us, we stand at the gate in discontentment and scratch. But we don't have to understand the "Why?" of the limitations He puts on us. Just remember, He sees an infinitely bigger picture than we see. Let's trust Him since we know that He loves us and that He sees the dangerous diesel trucks from His angle better than we can from ours.*

Objection: But my authority is telling me to disobey God. Good point! Sometimes we have to obey God rather than our authorities. But we'll get into how to deal with this in a couple of weeks.

The bottom line in Romans 13 is that is that when we rebel against our parents or other authorities, even if our earthly authorities never catch us, we never really get away with it. Ultimately, we've defied the God who put us under these authorities, which brings us to another reason not to rebel.

2 – Rebels can get into serious trouble. (Proverbs 30:17; Prov. 29:1; cr. Deut. 21:18ff; Rom. 1:30; Eph. 6:2,3; II Peter 2:9-19; I Samuel 15:22,23; Prov. 6:15; 13:18; 15:10)

“The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.” (Pr. 30:17)

“A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy.” (Pr. 29:1)

God is patient (II Peter 3:9) with us, but He won’t watch us rebel forever. And He won’t give us a countdown to our final chance. Some people must imagine that God works like our parents, saying, “Okay, I’ve warned you through your parents and your teachers over and over to get away from that crowd, so I’m giving you till Thursday and that’s it.” No. The end of serious rebels often comes suddenly, without warning.

In our present culture, it seems like no big deal to roll our eyes when our parents speak, talk back to them, or just ignore their instructions (wait till they’ve asked you three times before you start cleaning up the room.) Maybe you’ve even begun to relish the “*on the edge*” feeling you get when you tell your parents you’re spending the night at one house, actually go to a party at another house, and spray breath freshener in your mouth as you walk up your driveway to hide the liquor or smoke.

SONG IDEAS: Consider using songs like *Angel of Light* (Petra) or *Satan’s Boast* (Keith Green), both powerful songs that reveal the deception of those who are led astray by the enemy.

In fact, lots of voices today applaud this lifestyle, justifying it as “*being your own person*” or “*being authentic*.” But according to these verses, are these attitudes and actions just harmless teen fun? Read these astonishing verses one more time.

ILLUSTRATION: *They were three of the brightest stars of the 60’s. All three are rock legends, their names forever etched in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Many today still consider **Jimi Hendrix** the greatest guitarist who ever lived. His creative innovations indelibly impacted the future of rock. **Jim Morrison**, lead singer of *The Doors*, had a brilliant, creative mind and published poetry that some consider world class. **Janis Joplin** was so popular as to be hailed “the first goddess of rock.”*

All three sold millions of albums. All three performed before thousands of adoring fans. Their biographies have sold millions of copies. But all three died tragic, sudden deaths in chilling testimony to the truth of these verses. You see, although these artists had incredible talent and charisma, they lived way out on the edge, ignoring the warnings of both their authorities and those who loved them most. And while searching for freedom, all three found themselves enslaved to their destructive passions.

Seemingly in the midst of great careers, just like the Proverb said, they were suddenly gone. Hendrix was in the midst of recording a new album when he overdosed on barbituates, choking to death on his own vomit. Upon hearing of his death, Joplin cursed and lamented that he’d beaten her to it. Two weeks later, when she had almost completed recording an album, she shot up some unusually pure heroin in her hotel room, went down to the lobby to purchase some cigarettes, returned to her room, and fell down dead. Within a year, while Morrison was working on

Prov. 30:17: “Mock,” can also mean “deride.” “Scorns obedience” can mean “despise” or “hold as insignificant.” (TWOT) Keil says that the verse refers to a fearful and dishonorable end, where the scorner dies a violent death and his body becomes the prey of birds.
Rom. 1:30 – Someone writing verses 18-32 today would never include “*disobey their parents*” in a list of such heinous sins, an indication that our generation doesn’t get it. The Deuteronomy passage is chilling.

material for a new album, he sank into a deep depression and was found dead in his bathtub of a heart attack.

Just as Solomon had warned thousands of years ago, they refused to change when they were warned. And they fell suddenly, without remedy. Incredibly, they all died at the young age of 27. (Sources: No One Gets Out of Here Alive, by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, plus various internet sites.)

3 – Rebels miss out on God’s blessing. (Ephesians 6:1-3; cr. Colossians 3:20; Romans 8:28)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” – which is the first commandment with a promise – “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Discussion: According to this verse, what good does honoring and obeying our parents bring to our lives? (Life goes well. Enjoy life. Long life.) So what tends to happen to those who disobey and dishonor their parents? (Things don’t go well. Life isn’t enjoyable. Life is cut short.)

Ephesians 6:1-3 – Don’t conclude that “parents in the Lord” means that children must obey only if their parents are “Christian parents”. A similar passage in Colossians 3:20 leaves no option for such a restriction.

Contrary to popular belief, God is not an almighty party-pooper who delights in giving us restrictions that He knows will make us miserable. Jesus Himself said that He came to give us abundance of life (John 10:10). He wants us to obey our parents, not so that we can miss out on life, but so that we can fully enjoy life. To illustrate this, let me introduce you to a rebel who changed.

ILLUSTRATION: *John Newton’s godly mom taught him the Bible from an early age. But during his teen years he decided to turn against God, become a sailor, and take charge of his own life. He became an atheist and threw away all the morals his mom had taught him. At first, it seemed so freeing. He could say anything he wanted to, even inventing new ways to blaspheme God. He had no sexual restrictions. He treated people the way he wanted to treat them.*

But no one can live that way without consequences. What looks like the ultimate freedom quickly turns into the ultimate bondage. Eventually, some of the people he treated poorly became his authorities and treated him mercilessly. He was traded to a slaver in Africa who eventually treated him like a slave. In fact, Newton sunk so low that he became a despised servant of slaves. He once found himself on his hands and knees digging up roots to have enough to eat. It was the “Prodigal Son” story all over again!

Newton managed to escape Africa, only to find himself desperately bailing water off a storm-tossed ship at sea. They barely survived the storm, but found themselves drifting dangerously northward with no wind to take them back to England. The weather grew colder and their food supply dwindled. And just when he must have wondered what else could possibly go wrong, the captain began to draw a parallel between their trials and the story of Jonah. The captain surmised that John, with his blasphemies and rebellion, was just like rebellious Jonah, who was the cause of his troubled ship at sea.

John shuddered. He knew where the captain was going with the story. The Old Testament seamen threw Jonah overboard in order to save their ship. By the grace of God, the winds shifted, Newton made it home alive, was saved and became a preacher, but not until he had reaped the horrible consequences of what originally looked like the ultimate freedom. Only then could he understand the grace of God to save such a rebellious wretch, and write the song Amazing Grace, which would become a one of the most-loved hymns of the church. Think about Newton's life the next time you sing it. [Source: Amazing Grace, (The Dramatic Life Story of John Newton), by John Pollock, Harper and Row, 1981.]

Thousands of students live out a similar story day after day. They rebel against their authorities and go for the ultimate freedom through drugs, drinking, and free sex. They end up in the ultimate bondage with sexual diseases, drug addiction, broken relationships and often imprisonment.

DISCUSSION: Why do you think students often rebel against authorities? (Ideas: 1 – There's a thrill that comes with breaking rules. 2 – Authorities restrict us from some things that are fun. 3 – Defying authority gets respect from a certain group of students. 4 – When parents relish in defying authority, their children often model their behavior. 5 – Some students were physically or emotionally abused by their parents and other authorities. Now they despise all authorities. 6 – They are blinded by the Enemy.)

IDEA: Play a clip from the movie, *Big Daddy*, where Adam Sandler has a heated conversation with his father on the phone and explains the situation to the child over which he is custodian. Sandler calls to a nearby young man whose appearance would turn off any father. He tells him that he knows he hates his father. The man tells Sandler to mind his own business. Sandler replies and the man admits as he walks away, "I hate my father!" A great example of how many rebel because of a poor father figure.

ILLUSTRATION: *John Newton's background may tell us something about his rebellion. He had a loving mom, but she died before his 7th birthday. His dad was a ship captain who ran his family the same way he ran his ships. He expected John to jump at his every order and never showed any affection. John couldn't even laugh in his father's presence unless his father laughed first. He feared his dad. His other authority figures were also negative. When his father remarried and left for sea, he left John with a stepmom who didn't love him. School was no better than home. His headmaster was a tyrant. (Source, Amazing Grace, opt. cite)*

In the light of John's bad experiences with authorities, it's no shock that he rebelled. Neither is it surprising that he enjoyed cursing God, the ultimate authority. A recent study found that many atheists had poor relationships with their father, which they transferred over to a hate for God the Father. (*Faith of the Fatherless*, by New York University psychology professor Paul Vitz)

Conclusion

For some of you, so many authority figures have let you down so badly that you despise all authority, including God. And when someone challenges you to submit to God's authority, your gut reaction is to resist. You can't really believe that God could love you and want the best for you.

For some of you, this is hard to believe. But there's a heavenly Father who really loves you. He didn't just say it with words, but proved His love by sending His Son to die on the cross for you (Romans 5:8). If He loved you enough to die for you, don't be deceived into thinking that if you bow your knee to Him, He will make you miserable. Someone read a powerful statement that God made in the Old Testament:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11; cr. Deuteronomy 10:13; John 10:10; Ps. 34:10; 84:11; 37:4)

Jeremiah 29:11 Note the context. Jeremiah writes to God's people, who were living in exile in Babylon. Although they would be there for 70 years, their chastisement would not be forever. He still had good plans for them.

IDEA: If you sense that some of your students struggle with authority because they can't see God as a loving, compassionate heavenly Father, you may want to add another session to expand on this before you move on.

Without the foundation of believing that God loves them, students may never joyfully submit to either His authority or any authority operating under Him. Remember ***“the kindness of God leads you to repentance...”*** (Romans 2:4, NASB) You may want to speak next week on the prodigal son (Luke 15), emphasizing the compassion of the father. Or

or speak of the incarnation and crucifixion (e.g., Philippians 2:3-11), emphasizing that what all Jesus went through for each of us.

In your own words, what is God saying here? For Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, and John Newton, their freedom from authority started out with great fun, which quickly turned to misery, slavery and despair. That's exactly what God told us would happen, thousands of years ago! But the good news for all of us is that God loves rebels. That's what God's amazing grace is all about. Just as the father waited for the return of the prodigal son, God patiently waits with open arms for rebels to come home. John Newton heard his father's call, left his rebellion behind and came home. But even God's patience has its limits. The others lived on the edge till it was too late.

Today some of you need to make a decision. You've ignored God and gone your own way. Face it. Some rebels do drugs, some don't. A rebel is simply someone who ignores God and makes His own decisions. Let's bow our heads. God's not going to force you to follow. But He's standing with His arms outstretched, inviting you to leave your on-the-edge life and fall safely into His arms. If you're ready, I'll give you a moment to pray to Him.

Allow time for prayer.

Consider concluding by singing *“Amazing Grace.”*

Getting Along With Your Leaders

Lesson II

Beyond Obedience: How to Treat Authorities

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO RESPECT, LEARN FROM AND LOVE THEIR AUTHORITIES.

Introduction

Last week we began a series entitled “*Getting Along With Your Leaders*,” where we tried to get God’s view on how to treat our parents, teachers, and other authority figures in our lives. I’ll warn you again that we’re dealing with a topic that challenges our culture’s view of authority. So don’t be surprised if your gut feeling cries out at some point, “*This is crazy! There’s no way I’m doing that!*” All I ask is that you hear me out and open your heart to what God wants to say to you. So let’s pray that God will speak during this time.

Prayer

Last week we saw that God works through our authorities, even if they aren’t Christians. So, to rebel against even non-Christian authorities in normal circumstances is serious stuff. It’s really rebellion against God. But our parents, teachers, police, and other authorities deserve more than just our obedience. Let’s turn to God’s Word to find more...

B. Respect Them (Ephesians 6:2; cr. Romans 13:7, Acts 23:1-5, I Pet. 2:17)

“Honor your father and mother...”

Does it say to honor them only when they do and say the right things? No. We honor them because of their *position*, not just because we think they *deserve* our respect. We are to honor them because they are our parents and teachers. Period. I know this sounds weird, because our culture doesn’t think this way.

SOMEONE WHO LIVED IT: *To see how this view should affect our actions, let’s turn to Acts 23:1-5, where we find **the apostle Paul** in custody (just another day for Paul!) facing questions about his teachings. As he testifies, someone orders those near Paul to hit him on the mouth. So Paul puts him in his place by calling him a whitewashed wall, someone who looks good on the outside but stinks in the inside. Sounds like a justifiable response. After all, the guy had it coming to him. But someone near Paul says, “You dare to insult God’s high priest?”*

Acts 23:1-5: Ananias was one of the most disgraceful profaners of the high priest’s sacred office. He took tithes for himself that should have gone to the common priests (Josephus, *Antiquities* xx. 9. 2) “...his rapacity and greed became a by-word...” After he was deposed from office, he used violence, even assassination, to get what he wanted. His pro-Roman sentiments didn’t set well w/ the national party in Judaea. When war broke out against Rome in 66 A.D., insurgents dragged him from his hiding place in an aqueduct and killed him, (Josephus, *Jewish War* ii. 17. 9) making verse 3 quite prophetic. “**Whitewashed wall**” “suggests a tottering wall whose precarious condition has been disguised by a generous coat of whitewash.” (Bruce)

Now put yourself in Paul's place. What would you have replied to the guy? Probably something like, "The big oaf was just asking to be put in his place. Someone needed to set that pompous hypocrite straight!"

Instead, Paul responded,

"Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"

You see, the priest's position demanded respect, regardless of whether the priest's character deserved it.

DISCUSSION: What do you think it means to *honor* your parents and teachers and law enforcement officers? What are some ways that children show disrespect for their parents? How do they show disrespect for their teachers? What are some practical ways that we can honor them? Are you seeing some attitudes and actions in your own life that dishonor your authorities? How do you need to change? Write them down in your "Action Points" section.

Teacher: This discussion should bring issues to light that students realize they need to deal with. Consider having an open time of prayer for students to confess their shortcomings to God and ask Him for the power to change.

C. Learn From Them (Proverbs 4:1; Hebrews 13:7,17; cr. Titus 2:3,4)

"Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding."(Proverbs 4:1)

Many of today's drug addicts and prisoners began the road to destruction the day they started listening to their friends more than trusted adults. Instead of seeking wise counsel, they pool their ignorance and make stupid decisions.

Proverbs 4:1: Toy believes that "Father is not here used in the stricter (family) sense of the word, but with the wider connotation of *teacher*."

SOMEONE WHO BLEW IT: Last week we introduced sixties' rock legend **Jim Morrison** of **The Doors**. Jim had all the potential in the world. With an IQ of 149, he breezed through school with high grades and little effort. His parents took care of his material needs. Among classmates he had the kind of personality that made him fun to be around, saying and doing off-the-wall stuff that made everyone laugh. It was probably his ninth grade year when he tied one end of a string around his ear and kept the other end in his mouth. When people asked about it, he explained that he had a tiny bucket hanging down his throat to collect saliva for a medical test. His parents paid for his college education. Once he got into music, he had that rare magnetism that record companies look for – the ability to draw in an audience and hold them spell bound.

But with all this potential, he spent much of his days in gloom and misery, abusing his body with massive amounts of drugs and alcohol until his heart called it quits at the age of 27. What happened? I think that at the root of his fall was his rebellion against his parents and the wisdom of his authorities. (Listen up, guys. Because some of you will see yourself in Jim's childhood.) Even in the fifth grade he loved to shock his elders with his language. His den mother kicked him out of cub scouts for sassing her. In his middle school years he refused to participate in family functions. In high school he resented authorities. When he got kicked out of a theatre for causing

a disturbance, he smarted off to the policeman. Later in life he would often call them pigs, whether or not they had done anything to him. Instead of trying to please his parents, he drank, drew lewd drawings, and read books that glorified rebellion, like books on demonology. He cheated openly in class and laughed at his mom when she got mad at him.

Where did his rebel lifestyle lead him? Jim became progressively more callous, cruel, and out of control throughout his life. His writings show an obsession with death, violence, sex and magic. He felt no loyalty to his girlfriends and sometimes threatened them with knives. He did his faithful girlfriend Pamela a favor by introducing her to drugs. She would later die of an overdose. He once married a girl in a witch's ceremony, but later told her he would take no responsibility for his child with which she was pregnant. He said that having the child would ruin their friendship and he would take no responsibility for it. He promised that he'd be at her side to support her if she had an abortion. She went through with the abortion - alone.

The apostle Peter described Morrison's character in II Peter 2:10,18,19: "...those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.... They promise... freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."

Jim's publicist wanted a statement to define his purpose and direction. In part, it read,

"I've always been attracted to ideas that were about revolt against authority...I am interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos, especially activity that seems to have no meaning."

When the publicist wanted information about his parents and family for a fact sheet, he said that he had no family and that his parents were dead. Although someone objected that this would be unkind to his parents, he wouldn't budge.

As I said last week, his rejection of all authority didn't bring freedom. He became enslaved to his appetites. His drinking got so out of control that the band had to hire baby sitters to accompany him to ensure he would show for their concerts. At the age of 27, his abused body finally gave up and he was found dead in his bathtub.(Source: No One Gets Out of Here Alive, by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman)

SOMEONE WHO LIVED IT: *While Morrison despised his authorities, Basketball superstar Michael Jordan learned from his. After his humiliating cut from the high school team as a Sophomore, he could have grown bitter toward the authorities who cut him. Instead, he began waking up at 6:00 each morning to practice with his Junior Varsity coach. Later he would attend basketball clinics during the summers, where he received input from top coaches. He played extraordinary basketball by the time he entered college. But that didn't keep him from intently listening to his coach's evaluation of his weaknesses. By working hours a day on these weaknesses, he came a step closer to becoming perhaps the best player of all time.*

The application? If you want to be successful for the long haul, find some sharp older people, sometimes those who are already in authority over you, and begin respecting and learning from them. And if you want to be a man or woman of God and impact your world, find some older, wiser godly people at your church and begin to pulling them aside at every opportunity to ask them counsel about life. Even if your parents aren't Christians, keep the lines of communication open and ask them for advice in all kinds of areas.

BRAINSTORM: Think of some of the strongest Christians you know (from church, your family, acquaintances). On a note card, write down some questions that you'd like to ask them concerning how to have a more successful life. Here are some to get you started:

- *What are the biggest things I need to avoid in life that will hinder my success?*
- *What are the biggest things I need to do to obtain success?*
- *With the interests and gifts that I have, who are some people that I should get input from?*
- *What are some things you did or wish you had done when you were my age?*

Keep up with this card so that you can begin to ask people these questions.

D. Love Them (Matthew 22:39; I Jn. 4:8; 5:44)

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mt. 22:39)

Even if you don't like the decisions your authorities make or the way they treat you, you are still commanded to love them. Your parents, school teachers and other authorities are people like you. They get hurt when students cut them down. They get headaches. They get lonely and cry. They are people we want to influence for Jesus. People that God wants us to love. Even if you consider them your enemies, we're still called to love them in return. As Jesus said,

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you....” (Matthew 5:44)

SOMEONE WHO BLEW IT: *Like all parents, I'm sure that Jim Morrison's had their shortcomings. But they at least deserved his respect. They paid for his clothes and provided a secure place to live. He never had to work during high school and they paid his way through college. But he never seemed grateful or thankful. The only way his mom could get him to write home was to withhold his spending money until he wrote. When his mom and brother came to his concert to see him, he refused to even meet with them. Eventually, he stopped keeping in touch altogether and told his managers that he didn't want to ever talk to her again.*

SOMEONE WHO LIVED IT: *“Terry” couldn't stand a church administrator who would interrupt his class every week to tell them it was about time to close up. “Terry” wanted to lash out at the guy. But the Spirit redirected his thoughts. “Although he's going about it the wrong way, at least he's **trying** to do something right.” So Terry pulled the man aside and told him that he really appreciated his diligence. The administrator received the compliment like a football player at summer camp receives a cold drink. He admitted that he was so discouraged that he was about to quit. A little love solved the problem and started a relationship.*

CONCLUSION AND ACTION POINTS

Do you see your parents as just roadblocks to the life you want. You know, your parents are people too. They get pushed around at work and tired of their chores at home. They get discouraged when they realize they're not always the parents they should be.

Sure, your parents and teachers don't always love and encourage you the way they should. But the challenge today from God's Word is this: *What are you doing to love and encourage your parents and teachers?* I'm not asking if you emotionally love them. *I'm asking what have you done this week to demonstrate love to them?*

CLOSING ACTIVITY: As we close, let's break up into small groups and come up with some special ways we could show love to our parents. I'll give you five minutes to come up with some specific ideas. Appoint a secretary to write these down. When you finish, appoint a spokesperson to share the results with the entire group.

I'll give you a couple of minutes to write down the ideas that you feel God would have you start applying when you see your parents today.

PRAYER

Getting Along With Your Leaders Session III I'm Out To Change My World

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS SESSION, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO INFLUENCE AUTHORITIES AND STAND FOR GOD WHEN AUTHORITIES AND LAWS DEFY GOD.

SHARPENING YOU'RE AX

What Kind Of Students Do You Want To Produce?

Six months ago I read an article entitled, "*Do you really want your children to be like Jesus?*" I'm still reflecting on it. It challenges the entire concept of where we are trying to take our students. I think most parents and many youth ministers would identify with the parent who, during my senior year in high school said to another parent, "*I want my kids to be religious, but not a radical like Steve Miller.*" If we get really honest, some of us realize that we'd love to lead a huge group of students who were every parent's dream – clean cut, well-educated, destined to make it big in business and have effective ministries to other CEO's.

Parents would love you. You'd have none of those embarrassing kids who don't fit into the church mold. You know, the weird ones like John the Baptist, whose hair was wild, food was strange, and disrupted the status quo. Uneducated fishermen like Peter, who was outspoken, often obnoxious, and had no plans to further his education. People who often hang around the scum of society, like Jesus did. (Lk. 5:30-32)

The more I think about it, it's entirely possible to hit a home run with parents and the church staff, but strike out with God. Jesus prioritized the spiritually sick, because well people don't need a physician (Luke 5:29-32). Do you prioritize the spiritually sick? Paul said that he eagerly attended to the poor (Galatians 2:10). Do you go after the losers? Jesus said that if people hated Him, they would hate His disciples. Does anyone hate you?

In a lot of ways, I'm a people pleaser. I want people to like me and I avoid conflict like a plague. But often I find that I can't please people and please God at the same time. Which brings us back to the question of where we are taking our students.

I want to produce students who love God with an undying passion (Mt. 22:37). I want students who are willing to dress a little weird if they need to, in order to reach a subculture that dresses a little weird (I Cor. 9:19-22). I want students who are willing to drive a cheap car in order to have extra money to give away to the poor (I Tim. 6:17-19). I want students who pray, “*God, show me how I can make the best use my time and gifts in order to make the biggest splash possible for You in my generation.*” But remember, these radical students shake up convention and make most adults uncomfortable. And like Jesus, John the Baptist and Stephen, they may die violently and young. Do you *really* want your kids to be like Jesus? Do *you* really want to be like Jesus?

Introduction

REVIEW: Today we conclude our series on *Getting Along With Your Leaders*. Can some of you who attended these sessions help us review what we’ve covered for those who missed?

This week we’re coming from a different direction. I’m concerned that some of you may get the wrong impression from those two lessons. You could easily conclude that Jesus wants His followers to be the ultimate conformists, people-pleasers who just try to fit in with the world and religious system as it is.

But brainstorm about some biblical heroes to determine if they were conformists or not. What are some things they did that went against public opinion and shook people up? (Let them come up with as much as they can. You may have to bait them by asking, “*Does anyone remember what Daniel did?*” Etc. Examples to mention if they don’t: Elijay is called a “troubler of Israel” and challenges the king and Baal worshippers. Daniel defies the king’s edict by continuing to pray. Daniel’s friends refuse to bow down. The prophets speak against sin. John the Baptist challenges the religious leaders (Pharisees) and people to repent. Jesus infuriates people by speaking the truth. Jesus cleanses the temple. Peter defies his authorities by saying he must obey God rather than men. The apostle Paul frequently stays in prison.)

So, submitting to authorities doesn’t mean that we never challenge our authorities. And it certainly doesn’t mean that Christians are conformists. Paul put it to us straight when he wrote, “***Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world...***” (**Romans 12:2**) Listen carefully to me. Christians are not conformists. Christians shake up the conventional systems. Christians are strangers and aliens who don’t fit in (I Peter 2:11). The world hated Jesus and it will hate His true followers. (John 15:18-20)

Are you completely confused? On the one hand, we’re the ultimate law abiding citizens who submit to our governing officials. On the other hand, we’re the ultimate rebels who defy social convention. Having an identity crisis? Let’s ask God for wisdom as we try to discover what kind of people God wants us to be.

PRAYER

SONG IDEAS: *Hallelujah*, by the Newsboys, *Secret Ambition* or *Rocketown* by Michael W. Smith, *Not of this World* or *Chameleon*, by Petra. All these songs picture either how Jesus didn't fit in, or how we shouldn't fit in.

THINK TANK: Let's start out by dividing into small groups and discussing the following real life situations that Christians sometimes face. Decide how you would deal with each situation, and then come back together in a few minutes.

What Would You Do?

- Your parents are not Christians and won't allow you to attend your church's Wednesday Night youth meeting. Do you...
 - 1) Make regular plans to go to a friend's house that night, so that go to the youth meeting without your parents knowing. After all, God commands us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.
 - 2) Submit to your parents and stay home.
 - 3) Other _____
- Your school teacher assigned your class a book to read that is pornographic in nature.
 - 1) Refuse to read the book since God doesn't want us reading porno.
 - 2) Read the book since we know God wants us to submit to our authorities. Trust God to keep your mind pure.
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- Your school set a policy of no witnessing on the school campus.
 - 1) Witness anyway.
 - 2) Keep your witnessing to after and before school hours.
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- You just read a hilarious joke that pokes fun at your current president. Should you
 - 1) Pass it on to your friends and have a good laugh.
 - 2) Keep a collection of the jokes so you can publish one day.
 - 3) Refuse to repeat it since it doesn't show respect for an authority.
 - 4) Other _____
- The speed limit is 45 mph, but you promised you're parents you'd be home by 9:00 and you'll never make it if you keep the speed limit.
 - 1) Put the pedal to the metal and keep your promise.
 - 2) Stay within the limit and apologize to your parents for being late.
 - 3) Set your watch back ten minutes so you'll have an excuse.
 - 4) Other _____

Now, keep those sticky situations in mind as we discuss how to challenge and change your authorities and your world. (Student sheet is reproduced after the “overheads” pages.)

E. Challenge and Change Them (Acts 5:29; cr. 4:19)

“Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!”

Bible Search: Many times in your life, for some of you perhaps even when you get home today, you will find yourself facing authorities who are bucking God. How do we respond? Let’s go to God’s Word to find out. Who will volunteer to read verses? (Hand out verses.) Now read the verses out loud to the group, one at a time, and I want the other students to decide what this has to do with those times when we need to challenge our world or our authorities.

Before you rebel against your authorities...

- **Pray for Them** (I Timothy 2:1,2; Proverbs 21:1; cr. 21:30)

Proverbs 21:1 – “Heart” = “mind”. (Toy) “Directs it like a watercourse” pictures irrigation canals under the farmer’s control. (Kidner)

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.”

Sometimes we bristle when authorities get haughty or throw around their authority. But when we remember that God’s ultimately in control, we can relax. God’s not up there pulling His hair in frustration, saying, “Rats! If her parents would only loosen up, I could give her a great life!” You see, if God wants you to be able to attend an event, or spend time with a certain person, He can easily change your parent’s heart. Pray that God will work on your authorities’ hearts. Then relax!

- **Build a Foundation of Love and Respect.** (Luke 6:27,28)

“...Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

Most people can love people who love them. But the mark of the Christian is that, like our heavenly Father, we love the unlovely, even those who hate us. So, even if our parents and teachers curse us and mistreat us, we are still responsible to love them. And whether or not you *feel* love for your authorities, go ahead and do the *doing* part of these verses. Do good to them, bless them, and pray for them. Then God just might help you with your feelings. And remember, the more we treat our authorities with kindness, the more likely they are to give us a break when we need one.

- **Do an attitude check.** (Proverbs 16:7)

Some of you here may get excited about this Christian rebel/counter culture/righteous rebellion idea. You'd relish standing before some authority and defiantly saying, "I'm serving God rather than a man. So there!" If that appeals to you, be careful.

ILLUSTRATION: *One student caught fire for Christ and came to youth group reporting that some students had beat him up for his faith. We really respected him for his stand for Christ. But when he came back every week with new stories of ill treatment, we began to realize that people weren't roughing him up for his faith. They picked on him because he was obnoxious about his faith. He relished controversy.*

The Bible says, ***"When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him."***

So remember, ***"...love is kind..."(I Cor. 13:4)*** and since the truth is often hard for people to accept, we need to speak the truth in love. (Eph. 4:14)

- **Try to understand the reasoning and motivations of your authority.**
(Philippians 2:4)

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Take the situation we gave you earlier, where the non-Christian parents wouldn't allow their son to attend a mid-week Christian meeting. What are some of the parents' possible motivations for such a restriction? (Perhaps they don't know the kids you're now spending so much time with. Maybe they've heard some negative things about the group that need to be cleared up. Perhaps you're grades frankly stink and they are afraid you're using a spiritual excuse to put off things important things that you're avoiding.) Remember, God's big enough to work through even non-Christian parents to mold you and protect you.

- **Work toward a creative alternative.**
(Daniel 1:8-16)

After Babylon conquered Jerusalem, the king ordered some of the sharpest young Jews to come serve in his palace. Among these were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego. But they ran into a snag. The King told his chief official to feed the young men the royal food and wine. But Daniel believed that God didn't want them to eat the meat and drink the wine. Maybe it had been used in idol worship. Maybe the kind of meat was forbidden by law. Whatever the case, they had a conviction against the food. He discussed the matter with the chief official, who worried that if the King noticed them appearing less healthy than the other men, he might lose his head. So Daniel suggested the following creative alternative to his guard. (Does anyone remember what he suggested?):

Daniel 1:8-16: Meat and wine were allowed by God (Gen. 9:3; Rom. 14:2,14; I Cor. 10:25-26). So what was Daniel's problem with the food? Some possibilities: 1)

The meat and wine had probably been used in idol worship. 2) Perhaps the wine was too strong, making it a violation of taking strong drink. 3) The preparation by Gentiles may have defiled it. 4)

Ceremonially unclean meats such as pork may have been used. 5) Eating the king's food may have symbolized a covenant or agreement with the heathen king.

"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."

The guard bought the idea and after the ten days, Daniel and his friends appeared healthier than the others. It all worked out beautifully. Daniel avoided a conflict. The King didn't get mad. The official got to keep his head.

ILLUSTRATION: A youth minister wanted to use contemporary Christian music with his students, but some of the church leadership objected. He offered a creative alternative patterned after Daniel's situation. He suggested, "Let the youth listen to this music for a period of time. If they are worse for it, we'll stop promoting it. If they are better, we'll continue promoting it." When the leadership saw the positive difference it made, they backed off.

- **When Possible, Discuss Personally Before Challenging Publicly** (Matt. 18:15; cr. Gal. 6:1; Jms. 5:19,20)

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."

- **Work toward a Peaceful Solution.**

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9)

<p>Mt. 5:9: Peacemakers = "striving to use every opportunity open to them to effect reconciliation between others who are at variance." (Tasker)</p>

ILLUSTRATION: On January 17th, America celebrates Martin Luther King Day, honoring a man who stood against the unjust laws which put down blacks in America. During King's day, many localities barred blacks from sitting in the same section with whites in busses. He could have used his forceful speeches to incite violence against the authorities who had subjugated his people. Instead, he awakened the public conscious by peaceful means, stood for God's law over man's law, saved many lives that a violent revolution would have taken, and ultimately overturned the unjust laws.

- **Get wise counsel.** (Proverbs 15:22)

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but a man of understanding keeps a straight course."

- **Give God time to work.** (I Corinthians 13:4)

"Love is patient...."

Conclusion

ILLUSTRATION: In the movie, *The Matrix*, a computer whiz named Neal (also called Neo), played by Keanu Reeves, found that there was more to this world than met the eye. He was brought before a man named Morpheus, who offered him two pills. He held out his hand and said, you can take the red pill or the blue pill. The red pill opens up your eyes to the truth and all that goes with it and the other that allows you to go back to your old life and just fit into the world as you see it.

Tonight I offer you three pills.

IDEAS: 1) To make the choice more dramatic, hold three, different colored pills in your hand. Additionally, you could find enough candies in those colored wrappers (or wrap them yourself if you have a small group) so that each student has the three colored “pills” to take with him and decide.) 2) Consider showing the clip from the movie.

Take the **The Blue Pill** to become the ultimate **Conformist**. You just go home, try to forget everything that we said today, and go through life trying to balance pleasing everyone with getting all you can out of this life. Reassure yourself that this life is all there is and that the next boyfriend or car or set of clothes will fill the emptiness you feel inside. That’s the blue pill.

Swallow the **Yellow Pill** to become a **Non-conformist Against God**. Be a present day Jim Morrison, who rebels against all authority who gets in his way, including God.

Just remember that I warned you of the consequences. But that’s the yellow pill.

I challenge you to take the **red pill** and become a **Non-conformist for God**. You become a stranger and alien to this world. You keep your eyes on eternity as you drift through time. You love those around you and seek peace. But when your faith is challenged, you take your stand. If it costs a friendship or your life, you’re prepared to face the consequences, because you’re a rebel for God.

Don’t choose now. Put them in your pocket and think it over when you get home.

PRAYER

Getting Along With Your Leaders

Session I: “Living Within Boundaries...and Liking It!”

“Authorities in the Media”

I. Who Are My Authorities?

- Employers (I Peter 2:18, Colossians 3:22-24)
- Governing Officials (Romans 13:1ff, I Peter 2:13,14)
- Parents (Ephesians 6:1-3)
- Church Leaders (Hebrews 13:17, cr. I Cor. 16:15,16)
- Jesus/God (Matthew 7:21-23; cr. Philippians 2:9-11)

II. How Should I Relate to My Authorities?

A. Obey Them (Romans 13:1-7; cr. Prov. 21:1; Eph. 6:1; Heb. 13:17)

1. Rebels are really defying God. (Romans 13:1,2; cr. Pr. 21:1)

Objections:

2. Rebels can get into serious trouble. (Proverbs 30:17; 29:1)

“Three Rock Stars of the 60’s”

3. Rebels miss out on God’s blessing. (Ephesians 6:1-3)

“John Newton Reaps What He Sows”

Discussion: Why do you think students rebel against authorities?

“Newton’s Childhood”

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11; cr. Jn. 10:10)



ACTION POINTS

Getting Along With Your Leaders

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ACTION POINTS

Getting Along With Your Leaders
Lesson II
Beyond Obedience: How to Treat Authorities

B. Respect Them (Ephesians 6:2; cr. Rom. 13:7, Acts 23:1-5; I Pet. 2:17)

Discussion: What does it mean to honor/respect authorities?

C. Learn From Them (Proverbs 4:1; Hebrews 13:7,17)

“Morrison Blows It”

“Jordan Lives It”



Brainstorm: Questions I'd like to ask older, wiser people:

D. Love Them (Matthew 22:39; 5:44)

“Morrison Blows It”

“Terry Lives It”

ACTION POINTS

“How To Love My Parents”

1)

2)

3)

Getting Along With Your Leaders
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Getting Along With Your Leaders
Lesson III
I'm Out To Change My World

Brainstorm: Are Christians to be conformists or nonconformists?

E. Challenge and Change Them (Acts 5:29)

Before You Rebel...

- **Pray For Them (I Timothy 2:1,2; Proverbs 21:1)**
- **Build a Foundation of Love and Respect (Luke 6:27,28)**
- **Do An Attitude Check (Proverbs 16:7)**
- **Try To Understand the Reasoning Used by the Authority (Philippians 2:4)**
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- **When Possible, Discuss Personally Before Challenging Publically (Matt. 18:15)**
- **Work Toward a Peaceful Solution (Matt. 5:9)**
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- **Give God Time to Work (I Corinthians 13:4)**



CONCLUSION

Which pill will you take?

Blue Pill: “*The Ultimate Conformist*”

Yellow Pill: “*Non-Conformist Against God*”

Red Pill: “*Non-Conformist For God*”

Getting Along With Your Leaders

Lesson III

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*STUDENT WORKSHEET****What Would You Do?***

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