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Respect Authority



What are some ways you've been taught to show respect for authority?

QUESTION 1

#BSFLrelationships

Respect the authorities God has placed in your life.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We live in a society where we don't always agree. A married couple may disagree over which color to paint the living room, but they still love each other. And, based on talk radio, whether it's sports or politics, we seem to love to disagree with one another.

Disagreement is not the problem; disrespect is. And even though Americans seem to enjoy a spirited discussion, debate, or argument, most of us—79 percent, according to at least one survey—see a lack of respect as a serious problem in our society.⁴

The Bible affirms every human is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27); therefore, we should treat everyone as a person of worth. But if we're honest, it's downright hard to show that type of respect to those who only look out for themselves and fail to treat others with respect.

David faced this challenge in 1 Samuel; yet, David showed deep respect for King Saul, the very man who was trying to kill him. Through David we see that we can affirm those in authority without endorsing all they do with that authority.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 Samuel 24:3-7 (CSB)

³ When Saul came to the sheep pens along the road, a cave was there, and he went in to relieve himself. David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave, ⁴ so they said to him, “Look, this is the day the LORD told you about: ‘I will hand your enemy over to you so you can do to him whatever you desire.’” Then David got up and secretly cut off the corner of Saul’s robe. ⁵ Afterward, David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the corner of Saul’s robe. ⁶ He said to his men, “I swear before the LORD: I would never do such a thing to my lord, the LORD’s anointed. I will never lift my hand against him, since he is the LORD’s anointed.” ⁷ With these words David persuaded his men, and he did not let them rise up against Saul. Then Saul left the cave and went on his way.

In 1 Samuel 24, we see David’s relationship with God reflected in how he responded to Saul, the one God had placed in front of him. David’s response was remarkable because Saul’s treatment of David was far from admirable.

- » In a jealous rage, Saul tried to pin David to a wall with a spear (1 Samuel 18:7-11; 19:9-10).
- » Saul tried to have David killed by the Philistines (18:20-25).
- » Saul tried to convince his son and his servants to kill David (19:1,11).
- » Saul angrily told his son Jonathan he wanted David dead (20:31).
- » Saul killed priests for their allegiance to David (22:6-19).

No matter how wrongly Saul had acted against him, David did not believe he had the right to harm Saul, even when he had opportunity to do so. David called Saul “the LORD’s anointed” (v. 6). In David’s eyes, Saul’s position brought with it a certain respect.

How do you typically respond to authority figures in your life?

QUESTION 2

David respected Saul, but he was also on the run from him. In this passage, David and his men were in a wilderness area near En-Gedi (close to the Dead Sea). Saul got word of this so he went in pursuit, and David hid from him in a cave.

King Saul needed a bathroom break, but the cave he chose to enter was the very cave where David was hiding! David's men saw this as the opportunity given from the Lord to end Saul's persecution. They urged David to seize the chance he had to rid himself of his pursuer.

David crept up close to Saul with his knife and cut off the corner of his robe. *That's it?* It may not seem like much, but the act was far from harmless. Saul's robe represented his position as king. By making his robe noncompliant with the law, David dishonored Saul (Numbers 15:38-39). By making Saul's kingly robe unacceptable for him to wear, David had symbolically invalidated Saul's role as king.

Even though his act was symbolic, David immediately repented of his action; his "conscience bothered him" (v. 5). "He said to his men, 'I swear before the LORD: I would never do such a thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed. I will never lift my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed'" (v. 6). David then convinced his men to follow suit; he would not allow them to harm Saul. Clearly, David could have done a lot worse, but he repented and acted with grace toward an authority figure who didn't deserve it.

1 Samuel 24:8-11 (CSB)

⁸ After that, David got up, went out of the cave, and called to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David knelt low with his face to the ground and paid homage. ⁹ David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of people who say, 'Look, David intends to harm you'? ¹⁰ You can see with your own eyes that the LORD handed you over to me today in the cave. Someone advised me to kill you, but I took pity on you and said: I won't lift my hand against my lord, since he is the LORD's anointed. ¹¹ Look, my father! Look at the corner of your robe in my hand, for I cut it off, but I didn't kill you. Recognize that I've committed no crime or rebellion. I haven't sinned against you even though you are hunting me down to take my life."

What do you like best about David's approach in these verses?

QUESTION 3

What are some ways we can imitate David's actions and attitudes in our own dealings with authority?

QUESTION 4

David had the opportunity and ability to take Saul's life and end the misery the king caused him, but he restrained himself. David showed respect to Saul in six ways.

1. David confronted Saul, but he spoke with honor and respect. David acknowledged Saul's position and status over him when he "called to Saul, 'My lord the king!'" (v. 8).
2. David bowed as a sign of respect to the king.
3. David urged the king not to listen to the advisors who wrongly accused David of seeking Saul's life. At the same time, David refused to listen to his own men who encouraged him to kill Saul. David's reasoning? His conviction that Saul was "the LORD's anointed" (v. 10).
4. David offered evidence to show his unquestioned respect for the king. This evidence—the corner of Saul's robe—proved David had no desire to commit treason or harm the king.
5. David called Saul "my father" (v. 11). This did more than just acknowledge their family connection since Saul was David's father-in-law. In the context of everything David said, it also spoke of his feelings for Saul.
6. David showed how seriously he took his treatment of the king as a mark of his relationship with God. Although the king sought David's life, David would never sin against him.



1 Samuel 24:12 (CSB)



¹²“May the LORD judge between me and you, and may the LORD take vengeance on you for me, but my hand will never be against you.”

David made a great statement in verse 12, but it’s hard for us to leave conflict with an authority figure in the hands of God. Let’s face it: we all want to maintain control at least to some extent. Leaving justice in the hands of another, particularly when we know somebody has done us wrong, is not easy.

It’s important to note that David did not overlook or sugarcoat Saul’s sin, and neither did David believe Saul’s sin was without consequence. David understood that God’s role is to deal with sin; our role is to walk with God. Walking with God means that, while we ultimately leave the matter in God’s hands, we speak with both grace and conviction. We are to follow the example of Christ, who was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

David exemplified this in verse 12:

- » **Leave judgment in God’s hands.** “May the LORD judge between me and you” (v. 12). Whether it’s a spouse, family member, friend, co-worker, or someone in authority over us, we certainly need to do our part to make it a good relationship, but then we must leave matters in God’s hands.
- » **Leave your reputation in God’s hands.** When David said, “May the LORD take vengeance on you for me,” (v. 12) he was yielding his reputation to God.
- » **Leave vengeance in God’s hands.** Even as David expressed a desire for God to take vengeance, he determined he would not seek vengeance himself. “My hand will never be against you” (v. 12).

Why is it hard to leave vengeance in the hands of the Lord?

QUESTION 5

The life of faith we live as Christ-followers calls us to die to seeking vengeance for ourselves. Instead, we are to trust God as the just One and to extend His grace to others—including those in authority.

"God's role is to deal with sin;
our role is to walk with God."

ALVIN REID

HAND IT OVER



Consider each question then place a mark on the scale below each one.

How easy is it for you to leave judgement in God's hands?



How easy is it for you to leave your reputation in God's hands?



How easy is it for you to leave vengeance in God's hands and refuse to pursue some kind of payback?



Which of David's behaviors or attitudes would you like to imitate the next time you face conflict with authority?

LIVE IT OUT

God has placed authorities over you. How will you honor Christ this week and show them honor and respect?

- » **Identify all of the authority figures God has placed in your own life and your relationship with them.** (For example, Mike = boss) Pray for each of them this week.
- » **Refuse to speak or act in anger toward someone in authority.** Keep in mind that God is aware of your situation and ask Him to show you how to proceed in a way that honors Him.
- » **Hand over any unresolved issues with authority figures to God.** Acknowledge His ability to appropriately handle the situation.

Choosing to honor those in authority with respect is a faith issue. Show respect to your leaders and place your trust wholly in God. **He is fully capable to handle whatever situation you find yourself in and He is trustworthy.**



My thoughts