

# Authority and Submission

by K.P. Yohannan

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*K.P. Yohannan's sermon emphasizes the biblical principles of authority and submission, highlighting the importance of balance and servant leadership.*

**Scripture:** Romans 13:1

**Topics:** "Authority", "Submission"

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## Description

K.P. Yohannan addresses the complex topic of authority and submission, emphasizing the biblical mandate to obey governing authorities while cautioning against extreme interpretations that can lead to harmful practices. He highlights the importance of balancing submission to authority with individual responsibility to God, using examples from Scripture to illustrate the consequences of rebellion. Yohannan shares personal reflections on his early marriage, recognizing the need for love and servanthood in leadership rather than control. He concludes that true leadership mirrors Christ's example of serving others, advocating for a respectful and loving approach to authority.

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## Transcript

This is a subject with incredible, potential problems and difficulties. The Bible teaches very strongly about obeying authorities over us. The entire kingdom of God is meant to function in an orderly manner under God's plan of authority. But there is an extreme teaching on submission to leaders in authority, wives to husbands, children to parents, and political or religious leaders to others that can be dangerous, unless we balance it with the fact that each individual must know that he is also responsible to God, His law and His Word.

The balance must be kept between submission and individual guidance. Romans 13:1-2 (NIV) says, "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 authority is rebelling against what God has instituted." First Thessalonians 5:12 (NIV) says, "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the LORD and who admonish you."

Clearly God's plan is that we live in submission to God-given authority. Watchman Nee, in his book *Spiritual Authority*<sup>1</sup>, specifically states that in Scripture, rebellion, either passive or active, is sin. Pay attention. Lucifer became a devil. He was not created a devil. In fact, he began as the most amazing, beautiful archangel, the highest of all angels created by God. But he became the devil as a result of

rebellion and insubordination. His pride led him to step out from under God's authority and set himself up as ruler.

Korah destroyed himself and many others by not following God's plan of authority and recognizing Moses as God's leader (see Numbers 16). Saul sinned by not waiting for Samuel, the prophet with God-given authority, to conduct the sacrifice (see 1 Samuel 13). Gehazi did not follow the leading of his master, Elisha. He accepted gifts for the healing of Naaman's leprosy and, as a consequence, became a leper himself (see 2 Kings 5). God's order in the family is for the husband to be the leader, for the wife to submit and follow him, and for the children to follow the parents.

The Bible is filled with this teaching (see Ephesians 5-6). But in this teaching there also needs to be balance. Look at the lives of Daniel and Esther. Each had to stand for God in a situation in which there were leaders in authority over them. Daniel was thrown to the lions for his refusal to obey the king's decree. Esther had to approach the king uninvited, an action that could have led to her death, in order to plead for her people. Tens of thousands of lives have been destroyed through false teaching and extremism about submission.

Some leaders can become unbalanced. I am not just talking about cults. In some congregations, there is a sort of "shepherding theology." Under its teaching, people are told that they must consult their elders concerning what type of clothes they should wear, what house they should buy and where they should work. In the end, these people stop thinking for themselves and going to God for direction. Instead, they become like slaves, following the ideas of their leader rather than God, and their lives are destroyed.

Look at Jesus, Paul, Peter and others in the New Testament. Not once did these men force anyone to submit to anything. They gave guidelines for holy living. They spelled out principles and lived by them. They preached and taught freedom--freedom from traditions, freedom from sin and freedom to live a godly life. They did not seek to control behaviors or thoughts. Submission is a choice people make to follow the Lord as their leaders follow the Lord. One of my regrets in this area of submission is how I acted toward my wife during the first two years of our married life.

I was not sensitive to her at all. I was determined that I was going to be the leader and that she must obey everything. When something went wrong, she was the one to ask for forgiveness. I didn't ask for forgiveness, of course, because I was the husband. That is what I saw when I was growing up, and that is how I thought things should be. Things went on like this for a couple of years. Then God heard Gisela's prayers and opened my eyes, causing me to realize that she was not my slave.

From then on, things changed. I began to think about my wife as a human being, considering her needs, emotions and feelings. I learned practical things, like how to change diapers, cook, wash clothes and clean house. These were not part of my household when I grew up. They were things I had never done before. But God was teaching me that being in authority is about being a servant. I became quick to repent and ask forgiveness when I was wrong. I realized I must care for Gisela and love her, like Christ loved the Church and cared for her.

I must not misuse her. I must not take advantage of her. I must not order her around and control her, but love her. Love does not force people to do things a particular way. In any movement, any group, in each home--everywhere--God places leaders. But please understand: Jesus said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:43-45, NIV).

Jesus led by example. We also must lead others through love, patience and example. We lead others through bearing with them in their suffering, not through beating them into obedience. Notes: 1 Watchman Nee, *Spiritual Authority* (Richmond, VA: Christian Fellowship, 1980).

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