

# Honouring Authority

Quarter 5 | Lesson 8 | Character Development

1. **Connecting:** Play a game to understand the importance of authority.
2. **Teaching:** Learn what the Bible says about honouring authority and talk about ways to respect those in authority (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13–15, 17).
3. **Responding:** Consider ways to honour those in authority and pray for them.

## SUPPLIES

- Bible

*Optional Supplies:*

- Memory Verse poster
- Pencils
- Student Pages

## Teacher Devotion

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*Then Jesus came to them and said,  
"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."  
Matthew 28:18*

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It can be difficult to submit to the authority of others, especially those whom we believe are corrupt or abusive. When we see those in power who do not protect the rights of those they lead, we may feel cheated, angry, and betrayed. We want them to change, and we may think they will if we speak and act against them. We long for justice.

The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 2:12–14 that we should live in ways that point others to glorify the Lord of heaven and earth and submit ourselves to all earthly authorities. If we submit ourselves first to the authority of the Most High King, He will help us to submit to other authorities—even those we disagree with or those who behave dishonourably. Our ultimate goal should not be to change our society—it should be to honour the Lord in the midst of a broken and fallen world.

Think of a leader in your community or country and commit to praying for him or her daily. Behave in ways that honour him, which in turn honours the King of kings. Allow others to see Christ working in your life. All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him—and His purposes are always for your good.

# Lesson Time

## 1. Connecting: Play a game to understand the importance of authority.

Welcome the students as they arrive. Ask each to share 1 positive quality of someone in his family. If you have a large group or you do not have time to talk to each student individually, invite him to share with another student.

**Teacher Tip:** As often as possible, take the time to greet your students individually as they arrive. If you are not able to do this, try personally greeting 5 or 6 different students each time. Learning more about your students and their families will help you to show that you care about them, including their lives outside of class.

**Let's play a game. I will give you a command, and you will do it. If you do not do what I say, you are out of the game.**

Begin giving easy commands to the students, allowing enough time between commands for them to complete the actions. You can give any easy commands that are appropriate for your group, and you can use the same command more than once. After a few commands, speed up and give the commands more quickly. Here are some ideas for commands:

Touch your nose.  
Pat your head.  
Clap your hands.  
Jump up.  
Sit down.  
Turn around.  
Touch the ground.  
Stomp your feet.  
Do a dance.

Continue playing for 1–2 minutes. Then stop the game. Select 5 volunteers and have them stand in different areas around the outside edges of your teaching space.

**Now we will play again, but this time these volunteers will tell you what to do. Each time I point to a volunteer, she will give you a command to do. If you do not do what she says, you are out of the game.**

Play the game again, but this time the volunteers will give the commands. Point to the first volunteer. He will give a command. Give the students plenty of time to complete the command. After all the students have finished, point to another volunteer. Repeat the process 2 more times. You may point to the volunteers in any order, and the game will be more difficult if you choose them in random order. At first, it will be easy for the students to complete the commands. Then you will make it harder by speeding up the game. Point at the volunteers faster and faster until the commands come so quickly that the students cannot complete them all. You can even point to 2 volunteers at a time so the students will hear 2 commands at once. The game is over when there is only 1 student left in the game.

- **What was the best part about the game?**
- **What was the most difficult part about the game?**
- **Was it easier to play with 1 leader or with several leaders?**

As you saw from our game, leaders are important. They keep our community functioning well. Leaders often make rules or laws to help maintain peace and safety in a community. They may help people to resolve issues and conflicts and work to prevent conflicts from happening.

- **What would happen if we did not have leaders in our community—if everyone could do whatever she wanted whenever she wanted to do it?**

Allow students to share their thoughts.

Without leaders who make laws and rules, we would always live in fear. We would be afraid because everyone would only be protecting his own interests. The biggest, strongest, or most powerful person would be in control. And he would do only what was best for him and those he cared about. But leaders are supposed to help us to live safely and peacefully. They should protect each person in the community.

Many leaders are moral and upright people who want to serve their community. They understand the importance of good leadership and want to help their communities. Others may use their authority to serve themselves instead of serving others. Today we will talk about how we can honour both kinds of leaders.

## **2. Teaching: Learn what the Bible says about honouring authority and talk about ways to respect those in authority (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13–15, 17).**

- **Last week we learned about honouring our parents. What does “honour” mean?**

Review with the students that “honour” means giving respect because of someone’s position, not because of what they do or who they are as people. It is shown through our words, attitudes, and actions.

**Your older family members, such as your parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, have authority over you. They make rules that you need to follow. When you follow these rules, it helps to keep order in your home. When you do not follow the rules, it may cause conflict.**

- **Who are the people in authority over you?**

Allow students to share their thoughts. If they do not mention them, offer these ideas: parents and other family members, government and community leaders, church leaders, older people, work supervisors, and teachers.

- **What do you think it means to honour those in authority over you?**

Allow students to share their thoughts. They may offer suggestions such as being polite when talking to those in authority, obeying laws and rules, and trying to do what is best for the community.

- **Do you think you must agree with a leader or his decisions to honour him? Why or why not?**

Sometimes those in authority make decisions with which we do not agree. They may do so because they are considering the needs of many different groups of people. They may have more information about the situation. They may have different beliefs or principles than we do. We may not know or understand their reasons. When leaders make decisions we do not agree with, we may find it more difficult to honour them.

- **Do you think we need to honour leaders we disagree with? Why or why not?**

Allow students to share their thoughts. Tell them not to share about specific leaders but to speak about leaders in general.

- How can we honour leaders we do not agree with?
- What happens when we honour all leaders, even those we do not agree with?

**Listen to what the Bible says about honouring leaders.**

Have a student read 1 Peter 2:13–15, 17 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, the verse is printed here for you.

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*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. ...*

*Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers,  
fear God, honor the emperor.*

1 Peter 2:13–15, 17

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- Why does this verse tell us we should honour our leaders?

Leaders are put into positions of authority to help us to do what is right and to protect us from those who do not make safe and wise choices. Moral and upright leaders consider the interests of many people when they make their decisions. They may make decisions based on the needs of the whole community rather than just a few individuals. They may make decisions to best care for the whole community.

**Teacher Tip:** Even though there are corrupt leaders in many communities, the focus of this lesson is to learn how God wants us to respond. If the students try to discuss a specific leader, gently point them back to learning how God wants them to respond.

**However, sometimes leaders are corrupt or abusive. They may use their authority to meet their own needs rather than serving the needs of others. They may mistreat others to gain power or wealth for themselves or because they like to show that they are in control.**

- Do you think we need to honour these types of leaders? Why or why not?

Allow students to share their thoughts. Remind them again not to use specific leaders' names but to talk about leaders in general.

**The verse we just read tells us to honour all leaders of every human institution, even those whose ideas we do not agree with and those whose behaviour is not honourable. Even when we disagree, we need to obey the laws and always do what is right.**

- How can we honour authorities when we disagree with them or when they are not doing what we believe is best for us?

Allow students to share their thoughts.

**Here are some ideas to help you to honour the authorities in your life.**

**Focus on the positive.** For example, if a new well is needed in your community but the leaders choose to repair the road instead, think about how the better road will help your community.

**Speak respectfully.** If you do not have any positive things to say to or about an authority figure, keep your opinions to yourself. Even when you do not agree with those in authority, do not say negative things about them. Negative words create negative feelings. So even when those in authority are behaving dishonourably, do not share negative opinions or behave in an angry way toward them. When you do communicate, do it in a respectful way so you can share your thoughts with others without causing an argument.

**Consider the consequences.** Behaving disrespectfully toward those in authority usually has a negative effect on your life. For example, if you speak disrespectfully to a police officer, he may arrest you. If you do not do what your supervisor says, you may lose your job. Before you make a decision that may have negative consequences in your own life, carefully consider your decision.

**Offer to help.** You may not think you have much to offer, but you can help in your community. For example, if you feel there is too much trash on the side of the road, arrange to clean it with a group of friends. If you see that your neighbour's roof needs to be repaired, talk with your community or church leaders about it. Although you cannot fix everything that is wrong in your community, you can make a difference in the lives of the people around you.

**Pray!** You can pray for an attitude of humility and respect. Even when leaders do not behave honourably, you can treat them with respect. You can also pray for those leaders to act in honourable ways! Remember that God placed them in authority, and He is more powerful than any human on earth, including leaders. Ask Him to help you to honour those in authority over you.

**Honouring authority** does not mean we should worship our leaders. Nor does it mean that we should do things that are against God's law because a leader told us to do it. Listen to what the Bible says about God's authority.

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*Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

Romans 13:1

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- **What does this verse tell us about all authority?**

It is established by God.

God is the ultimate authority, and His purposes for your life are always good. Even when the leaders on earth do not do what is best for you, He cares for you and works for your good.

### **3. Responding: Consider ways to honour those in authority and pray for them.**

- **As a teen, what can you do to respect authority?**

Remind the teens of the ideas you gave earlier: focus on the positive, speak respectfully, consider the consequences, offer to help, and pray for an attitude of humility and respect.

**The Bible tells us we should pray regularly for our leaders.**

Show the Memory Verse poster if you are using it.

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*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

1 Timothy 2:1–2

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**Think of 5 people who have authority in your life. It may be a parent, a church leader, a government official, a police officer, or anyone else. Make a fist and hold it in front of you. As you think of each person, raise 1 finger. When all your fingers are raised, pray for each of those people specifically. As you pray for each person, put 1 finger down. If you do not want to talk to God about those people, you can think instead about how you can focus on the positive, speak respectfully, and offer to help that person.**

*Optional:* If you are using the Student Pages, your students can respond on these pages.

Give the students 2–3 minutes to pray or think quietly. Then close by praying a blessing based on Romans 13:1, 7 and 1 Timothy 2:1–2.

**Blessing:** May the One who gives all authority give you an attitude of respect and honour for the leaders in your life, whether they behave honourably or not, so that you may lead a peaceful and quiet life.

**Family Connection:** Encourage the students to ask a family member, “Who is the most honourable leader you know? Why do you respect him?” They can then share that honouring those in authority helps us to live peacefully.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter’s song, if possible.

“Great Are You Lord” by All Sons and Daughter: <https://youtu.be/vQLMnPYoR9k>