

# Principle of God's Will, Parental Authority, and Submission - Larry Coy

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## Overview of Sermon

The speaker asserts that God's fundamental design for revealing His will to young people is through their parents. Other spiritual inputs like prayer, sermons, and personal impressions are secondary and can lead to spiritual confusion if not first harmonized with parental authority. True faith involves understanding and submitting to God's principle of authority, which He uses to develop character, build faith, and accomplish His purposes. The sermon distinguishes between submission (a constant attitude of respect) and obedience (an action that is limited by God's commands), providing a framework for navigating relationships with parents and other authorities.

## Theology: Who God Is and How He Works

- **Who God is:**
  - God is the sovereign Designer of family structures and authority. He is in control of all authorities, even difficult or unrighteous ones.
  - God mediates His will through ordinary, imperfect means—especially parents. His power is at our disposal in difficult circumstances.
  - God values order, wisdom, formation through relational authority, and family honor.
  - God does not endorse sin; He calls His people to obey Him first.
- **How God responds to humans:**
  - God's primary concern is how we emerge from our home life—our attitude and character—not the specific circumstances of our upbringing.
  - He blesses obedience within His ordained structures and views rebellion against them as rebellion against Himself.
  - If we fail to learn obedience at home, God Himself takes over our teaching, often using "tougher tools" in the world.
  - God uses authority to increase our faith, teach us obedience and respect, and develop security in us.
  - He can change the hearts of those in authority to accomplish His purposes (**Proverbs 21:1**).

- He uses transformed lives to draw others, including non-believing family members, to Christ.

## Identity: Who God Says You Are and How You Should Live

- As a child (biologically or spiritually), you are called to honor and obey parental authority “in the Lord.” You are a learner shaped by wisdom and correction.
- As a follower of Christ, you are called to be a witness through transformed character—a cooperative spirit, humility, and integrity. This is particularly evident in honoring parents.
- You are to practice submission (a respectful attitude) toward all authorities and obedience (action), unless obedience would violate God’s clear commands.
- In conflicts with authority, you are called to be “submissive and disobedient”—maintaining respect while refusing to sin and seeking creative, honoring alternatives.

## Part 1: God’s Will Revealed Through Parents

The fundamental way God reveals His will to young people is through their parents. Focusing first on secondary means (Holy Spirit impressions, sermons, counseling, circumstances, Bible reading, prayer) without embracing God’s primary design can lead to manipulation and spiritual confusion.

### Scriptures Cited and Context

- **Ephesians 6:1–3:** “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right...”
  - **Context:** Part of the Pauline household code instructing Christians on Spirit-filled relationships. “In the Lord” frames obedience as devotion to God.
  - **Application:** Parental authority is divinely assigned. Disobedience to parents is disobedience to God’s order. Honoring parents carries a promise of wellbeing.
- **Proverbs 6:20–23:** “My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching... the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light; and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.”
  - **Context:** Wisdom literature portraying parental instruction as God-given wisdom that guards against danger.
  - **Application:** The father’s command is a “lamp” (broad moral direction), and the mother’s teaching is a “light” (practical daily guidance). Parental correction leads to life.

- **Paraphrased Insight:** “The advice of the parent is like a beam of light into the dark corners of a child’s mind,” illuminating confusion and immaturity.

## Key Points

1. The fundamental way God reveals His will to young people is through parents.
2. Disobedience to parents is, from God’s perspective, disobedience to God.
3. Parents’ roles complement each other: the father’s commandments are the “lamp,” and the mother’s teachings are the “light.”
4. Parental instruction includes necessary, life-giving reproofs.

## Illustrations and Examples

- **Personal Anecdote:** The speaker felt exhausted after trying to act as “mother” for a few days, highlighting the constancy of maternal oversight.
- **Global Observation:** The speaker noted that in cultures worldwide (Brazil, China, Colombia, Italy, Germany), parents are universally seen as having “hard-to-get-along-with idiosyncrasies.” The point is that God’s design works through imperfect parents.
- **Family Example:** The speaker’s youngest daughter, gifted in mercy, hesitates to approach her straightforward father, illustrating how different parental personalities require respect.

## Part 2: Understanding and Responding to God’s Principle of Authority

God is focused on how we emerge from our home life, regardless of its challenges. A disrespectful attitude toward parents, not their behavior, leads to our own destruction.

### The Danger of a Mocking Attitude

- **Scripture: Proverbs 30:17 (paraphrased):** “The eye that mocks a father and despises to obey a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.”
  - **Context:** This illustrates the severe spiritual consequences of harboring contempt for parental authority.
  - **Pastor’s Insight:** The problem isn’t a mother who “bugs” you; that’s a natural maternal instinct. The danger is despising her for it, which causes a loss of insight into life’s practical issues.

### Leaving Home and the “Psychological Barometer”

When we leave home, it should be both a physical and emotional departure. Leaving in rebellion leads to emotional entanglement in bitterness. Parents have an intuitive “psychological barometer” that senses if a child is unprepared for adult life, based on observing their:

1. **Response to Authority:** A child who won't take orders at home will struggle with bosses, teachers, and even spouses. The pastor suggests the primary cause of divorce is a problem with authority—of both individuals with God.
2. **Respect for People:** Mistreating siblings predicts future relationship difficulties.
3. **Assuming Responsibility:** Laziness at home leads to problems in work and marriage.

When parents see these rebellious attitudes, they feel their job is “unfinished” and continue to “meddle.” When they see obedience, respect, and responsibility, the Spirit of God frees them to let go.

### **Illustrations of Reconciliation and Freedom**

- **The 50-Year-Old Man and His Mother:** A man who hated his mother for decades was counseled to ask for her forgiveness. He did, and a lifetime of bitterness left him. His 82-year-old mother responded with love. In her eyes, her son finally “grew up.” Years later, he discovered she had become a Christian and left a letter in her will praying for her children to know Christ.
- **The Pastor's Daughter, Sharon:** During her junior year, the pastor and his wife observed her respect and responsibility, declared her an adult, and gave her freedom to make her own decisions. Her behavior didn't change at all, proving she had already internalized the right principles.

### **Part 3: The Spiritual Foundation of Authority and Faith**

The first practical result of understanding authority is that our spiritual relationship with Christ becomes real.

#### **The Centurion's Great Faith**

- **Scripture:** The story of the Centurion from **Matthew 8:5-13**.
  - **Context:** A Roman centurion, a man in a command structure, asked Jesus to heal his servant from a distance. He said, “I also am a man under authority... just say the word, and my servant will be healed.”
  - **Pastor's Insight:** Jesus marveled, “I have not found so great a faith in all of Israel.” The centurion understood that true power comes from being submitted to a higher authority, recognizing that Jesus operated under the authority of God the Father.

- **Application:** Real faith is believing God is in control of the authorities in our lives and can accomplish His purposes through them.

### **Distinguishing Position from Personality**

We must separate the person in authority (personality) from their God-ordained position. We are called to respect the position even if we don't like the personality.

- **Example:** Getting a speeding ticket from a rude police officer. Tearing up the ticket (disrespecting the position) because of the officer's attitude (personality) only leads to more severe consequences.

### **Part 4: Submission, Obedience, and God's Work Through Authority**

This section focuses on practical application, especially when facing conflict or ungodly commands from authorities.

#### **Honoring Parents as a Primary Witness (Modern American Context)**

- **Scriptures:**
  - Jesus' teaching on comparative love for family vs. Christ (**Luke 14:26**, **Matthew 10:37**) was given in a culture with strong family bonds that could hinder discipleship.
  - In modern America, where family bonds are often weak, the true evidence of conversion is honoring parents (**Exodus 20:12**), which Jesus affirmed when rebuking the Pharisees for neglecting this command (**Mark 7:9-13**).
- **Application:** New believers should prioritize restoring and honoring their relationship with parents as a primary witness to the Gospel.
- **Examples:**
  - **"Bill":** A high school junior whose transformed, sacrificial service to his parents led both his mother and father to Christ.
  - **Catholic Family:** A son returns from a retreat, and his changed life leads his parents to Christ.
  - **"Timothy Terry":** A father seeks Christ after observing his son's changed life.

#### **The Daniel Model: A Cooperative Spirit Under Authority**

- **Scripture:** Daniel 1:8-16.
  - **Context:** Daniel, a teen in Babylon, refused to be defiled by the king's food.

- **Application:** Instead of open defiance, Daniel objectively perceived the king's positive motive (health), respectfully appealed to his immediate authority, and proposed a creative alternative (a 10-day test). God worked through the authority to change the policy.

### The Exception Clause: Respectful Disobedience

There is a crucial distinction between submission and obedience.

- **Submission:** An attitude of respect. It is absolute and universal (to God, one another, and authorities, per **Ephesians 5:21** and **Romans 13:1-7**).
- **Obedience:** An action. It is relative and limited. We must not obey a command to sin.
- **Application:** When commanded to sin, we must be respectfully disobedient. The right response is a submissive "I can't," not an insubordinate "I won't."
- **Biblical Examples:**
  - Daniel refusing to bow to the idol (**Exodus 20:4-5**), while maintaining respect for the king.
  - The apostles preaching despite being forbidden (**Acts 4:18-20**, **Acts 5:27-29**), without reviling the government.
- **Marriage Example:** A wife asked to lie should not respond with an insubordinate tone but with submissive conviction, explaining she cannot because of her obedience to God. Silence that implies agreement is a form of deceit.

### Practical Steps and Application

#### For Navigating Conflict with Parents/Authority:

- The speaker referenced the story of a high school senior whose non-Christian father forbade her from attending a Christian college.
  - **The Counsel:** Following the principle of **Proverbs 21:1** ("The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord..."), she was advised to apologize for her defiant attitude and submit to her father's decision.
  - **The Result:** She obeyed. Her father, seeing her changed, respectful attitude, changed his mind and paid for her to go to the Christian college.
  - **The Counter-Example:** In a similar case, God did *not* change the father's mind. The girl went to a state school, where she had to learn to live for God outside her Christian bubble and became a leader.

- **The Principle:** The outcome is secondary. Living by God's principle of authority is the "right" way, regardless of how God chooses to work it out.

#### **Four Steps for Reconciliation (For those struggling with authority):**

1. Write down your parents' faults.
  2. Write down how you have wronged them (disrespect, disobedience).
  3. Purpose to go back and ask forgiveness for what you did wrong.
  4. Get on your knees and sincerely forgive your parents for what they did wrong to you.
- **Promise:** This process can transform not only your disposition but also the hearts of those in authority over you.

#### **For Young People:**

- Submit to parental guidance as an act of obedience to God.
- When discerning decisions, begin by asking: What have my parents counseled?
- When parents' flaws frustrate you, remember God's design and receive their correction as life-giving.
- Memorize **Ephesians 6:1–3** and **Proverbs 6:20–23**.

#### **For Parents:**

- Embrace your complementary roles: fathers setting moral direction ("lamp"), mothers providing detailed teaching ("light").
- Offer correction with consistency and compassion.
- Recognize that your counsel is central to your children's spiritual formation, even in a culture that prizes autonomy.

#### **For the Church:**

- Preaching and programs should reinforce, not replace, parental authority. Equip parents and teach youth to honor them.

#### **Takeaway**

God's will is not obscure. He has placed parents as His primary revealer of wisdom for young people. By honoring them, receiving their lamp and light, and embracing their correction, you will be led into the way of life. True faith is trusting God's sovereignty over the authorities in your life.

