

Under God's Good Authority

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

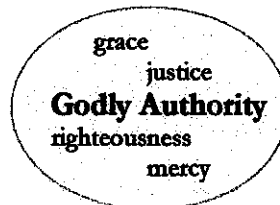
Phil. 2:5-10

When do you resist living under authority? When are you glad for it?

Continuum of authority in parenting can tend to look like this:

Permissive ←————→ Strict

The 3rd Way: Godly Authority



Dictionary definition of *authority*:

1. the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.
2. a person or organization having power or control in a particular sphere.
3. the power to influence others, especially because of one's commanding manner or one's recognized knowledge about something.

On the very first page of the Bible, then, power, flourishing and image bearing are connected. Power is for flourishing - teeming, fruitful, multiplying abundance. Power creates and shapes the environment where creatures can flourish, making room for the variety, diversity and unpredictability of coral reefs, and tropical forests, but also the surprising biological richness of high deserts and ocean depths. And image bearing is for power - for it is the Creator's desire to fill the earth with representatives who will have the same kind of delighted dominion over the teeming creatures as their Maker. Which means image bearing is for flourishing. The image bearers do not exist for their own flourishing alone, but to bring the whole creation to its fulfillment.

Playing God, by Andy Crouch, p. 35

Scripture Study:

1. Genesis 1-3 passages

- Why are we under authority? Where does it come from? How does it originate?
- What's the nature and characteristics of God's authority? What is its purpose? How is it embedded in the created order?
- What's the relationship between authority, and power and control? What about submission? What does it look like for these to be in right relationship to one another? What happens when that relationship gets out of whack – any insights from this passage?

2. John 13:1-20 (Ps. 41:8-13)

- Where does authority show up in this passage? Who's got it? How is it used?
- Where does submission to authority show up? Who is submitting to whom? What do we learn from observing Jesus about how authority and submission related to one another?
- How does Jesus' understanding of his own authority direct and shape his interactions with the disciples? How does he respect and even call out the authority of the disciples?
- How does the misuse of authority (power, control, etc.) show up in this passage? What do we learn from it?

Questions for reflection:

1. How has your own understanding of living under God's authority been strengthened? Are there any specific ways you can see He's calling you into greater submission to His authority?
2. What about the exercise of your authority? How do you most consistently differ from God in the exercise of your authority? What correction or encouragement has looking at God's good authority brought to your own tendencies?
3. Anything you're struggling with or trying to sort out from our discussion today?