

## *Shepherding A Child's Heart*

### **Week 7: Biblical Goals and Parental Authority**

**Main Idea:** The biblical goal of parental authority is to represent the authority of God in the life of a child, help them understand that His authority is for their good, and give them the opportunity to obey God by proxy through their parents. Understanding the biblical goal of parental authority provides clarity and consistency regarding why and how we exercise that authority.

**Foundational principle:** We are all under God's authority, and His authority is a good thing.

1. How does our culture, and how do we naturally tend to think about authority?
2. In contrast to fleshly and cultural assumptions, why is it good to be under God's authority? (Deut 30:15-16)

**Read Psalm 119:44-45:** "I will continually obey your law forever and ever and I will walk about in freedom for I have sought out your precepts."

3. How does the bible define freedom? How is this at odds with a worldly notion of freedom and autonomy?

**Foundational principle:** Parental authority is derived from God and it is therefore the duty of parents to exercise it.

**Read Genesis 18:19...** "For I have chosen him [Abram] *so that he may command his children and his household after him* to keep the way of the Lord...

**& Psalm 78:4b-7...** "But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which *He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children*, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, *that they may arise and tell them to their children*, that they should put their confidence in the God and not forget the works of God but *keep His commandments.*"

4. Who commands parents to command their children?
  - a. What are the implications?
5. What message does godly parental authority convey to children?
6. How is parental authority connected to preaching the gospel to your children?
7. If a parent neglects to exercise authority, what are they doing?

**Read Exodus 20:12** "Honor your father and mother..."

**& Ephesians 6:1-3** "Children, obey your parent's in the Lord, for this is right..."

8. Who commands children to obey their parents?
  - a. Where does parental authority come from?
  - b. When a child obeys or disobeys a parent, who are they really obeying or disobeying?
  - c. For youth: How is obedience to your parents an act of worship?

## Application:

9. When should a parent expect obedience from their children? Why?
10. When should a parent discipline disobedience?
11. Why is basing discipline strictly on the severity of outward behavior a faulty metric? (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-19)

## Exercises:

### 12. Template:

- a. What is God's authority for? – For His glory and our good
- b. Why does he give commands (dos and do-nots) – For our flourishing and protection
- c. Why do we object to them? – Because we question God's authority and assert our own
- d. What are our options when His will is revealed to us? – Obey or disobey
- e. What happens when we trust and obey His revealed will? – Blessings associated with obedience
- f. What happens when we do not trust and disobey instead? – Painful consequences

### 13. Scenario 1: You say to a young child "come here" and they don't...

- a. Why did you give that command?
- b. Why is your child delaying or objecting?
- c. What are your child's only two options when you say "come here"?
- d. What should a parent do if their goal is to represent the good authority of God to the child in that moment?
  - i. What's wrong with "counting to three"?

### 14. Scenario 2: A child objects to the food that is served

- a. Why did you serve the meal in the first place?
- b. Why are they objecting?
- c. What are your options?
- d. What's the goal if you offer alternatives or give them what they ask for?
  - i. What's wrong with this goal and that course of action?
- e. What do you do if your goal is to help them to understand and appreciate God's good authority?

### 15. Scenario 3: A child is throwing a tantrum in an effort to object to a decision you've made...

- a. Why did you make that decision for your child?
- b. Why are they objecting?
- c. What are your options?
- d. What's your goal if you offer an alternative or some other benefit if they comply?
  - i. What's wrong with this?
- e. What do you do if your goal is to help them to understand and appreciate God's good authority?

### 16. Scenario 4: