

The Cost of Rebelliousness . . .

Cautiously maneuvering through the jagged, broken rails of his enclosure, a spirited young stallion slipped out into a new life of self-direction and unbridled independence. Although free to chase the wind as he pleased, he would no longer feel the warm touch of his master's sun-wrinkled hand. His rebellious nature was liberated . . . unconfined, yet never again would he taste the tender sweet corn so generously provided from a fertile valley on the master's farm. Sadly, his great escape from all the protective reins of authority brought about a burdensome responsibility for his own safety and sustenance. With the passing of time, a rocky crevice hidden on the side of an eroding bluff became the only solace for this storm-weathered steed.

*"The simple are killed by their turning away,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
but whoever listens to me will dwell secure
and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."
(Proverbs 1:32–33)*

Q: "What if I don't respect the person in authority?"

You are not called to respect the personality of another, but you are called to respect the position of authority.

*"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution."
(1 Peter 2:13)*

Q: "Is there a difference between obedience and submission?"

Both obedience and submission are clear directives from God. However, consider the difference between conformity to the letter of the law and yielding to the spirit of the law. Mere outward compliance does not reflect God's heart. God's desire is that submission to His ordained authorities be done with inner attitudes of respect, loyalty, gentleness, and ultimate trust in Him for the outcome.¹

*"For the LORD sees not as man sees:
man looks on the outward appearance,
but the LORD looks on the heart."
(1 Samuel 16:7)*

Example:

In order to advance in his job, a husband may decide that a move to a different city would benefit his career. His wife may outwardly submit to the move yet inwardly remain bitter and resentful for having to leave. Sometimes it can be very hard to give up a cherished home or to start over and make new friends. The wife with a submissive heart will support the move, seek ways to make it easier for her mate to adjust, and trust God that the move is God's will for their life.

Know When Not to Submit

Establish your boundaries.

Submission stops at the threshold of God's moral principles. (Psalm 119:134)

- Do not submit when asked to violate God's Word.²
- Do not submit when asked to violate your conscience.
- Do not submit to physical or verbal abuse.³
- Do not submit to an action that does not glorify God.

Evaluate your convictions.

Occasionally you may have to endure the consequences of refusing to obey when asked to violate your personal convictions and God's principles. (Psalm 119:34)

- **Examine** your attitudes to see whether they demonstrate respect and deference to others. (Ephesians 6:5)
- **Engage** godly counsel for wisdom and advice. (Proverbs 15:22)
- **Eliminate** error through searching the Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16)
- **Explain** your position respectfully, with carefully chosen words. (Proverbs 25:15)
- **Endure** the suffering you may encounter for refusing to do what is wrong. (1 Peter 3:17)

*"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart."
(Psalm 119:34)*

Surface Causes of Reluctance to Submit

Many of the problems that surround submission are a result of an unhealthy bondage to *fear*.⁴

False ideas about submission

- "I'm afraid if I submit to him, I'll be his personal doormat." (To have a submissive heart, read and count on 2 Timothy 1:7.)

Experiences that have destroyed trust

- "My mother was so abused by Dad; I can't let that happen to me." (To have a submissive heart, read and count on Psalm 118:6, 8.)

Absence of adequate leadership

- "He won't do what needs to be done, so I have to take control." (To have a submissive heart, read and count on Proverbs 28:26.)

Reluctance to release control

- "I don't want anyone telling me what to do." (To have a submissive heart, read and count on Proverbs 12:15.)

Key Verse to Memorize

*"Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."
(Ephesians 5:21)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

1 Peter 2:13–3:22

Choosing Submission Is an Act of Strength

Submission is not weakness, but is a position of strength. It is a choice to act on faith, choosing to trust God to work His will through the authorities in your life.

- **Choose** to live under your God-given authorities. (Romans 13:1)
- **Choose** to pray for those in authority over you. (1 Timothy 2:1–2)
- **Choose** to respect the position rather than the personality. (Romans 13:1)
- **Choose** to sacrificially submit to others out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:2)
- **Choose** to please others rather than seeking your own way. (Philippians 2:3)
- **Choose** to put your future in the hands of God. (Jeremiah 29:11)
- **Choose** to be submissive, even if it means suffering. (Romans 5:3–4)
- **Choose** to thank God, regardless of the end result. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Related Topics . . .

- Marriage:
To Have and to Hold
- Premarital Counseling:
Are You Fit to Be Tied?
- Pride & Humility:
The Prescription for “I” Strain
- Rebellion:
Reclaiming the Rebel
- Spiritual Abuse & Legalism:
Afflicted by Authority
- Unbelieving Mate:
Becoming a Winsome Witness

1. Dorothy Kelley Patterson, “A Study in Submission: 1 Peter 3:1–7,” *Theological Educator* 13 (1983): 72.
2. Patterson, “A Study in Submission,” 74.
3. Nancy Groom, *Married without Masks: A New Look at Submission and Authority*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 42–44.
4. Groom, *Married without Masks*, 83.

“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”
(Philippians 2:3)

Securing Freedom through Submission

Submission to authority is a vital principle that God has established so that everyone can experience the real freedom that brings a victorious life.

Submission Secures for You . . .

- Freedom from responsibilities for which God does not hold you accountable
- Freedom from falling into temptations that are too strong for you
- Freedom from feeling you have to manipulate others
- Freedom from the constant need to be in control
- Freedom from the need to always be right
- Freedom from seeking to change others
- Freedom from conflict and frustration
- Freedom from a guilty conscience

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