

## **The Book of Ecclesiastes**

### **Session 7: Chapter 8 – Submitting to Authority**

Open: Who is the best boss you've ever worked for or the best leader you've ever known?  
What made him or her such a strong leader?

Read: Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

JP opened this session reminiscing about asking his parents "why" when they gave him instructions. His parents' response, he said, was often, "Because I said so." I'm sure many of us can relate.

Did your parents or caretakers say the same thing when you were a kid?  
How did you react to their response?  
If you're a parent now, do you say "Because I said so" to your children?  
How do they react to you?

How would you say Christians are to relate to the authority figures in our lives? Why?

Do you find it easy or difficult to submit to those in authority over you? For what reasons?

How do you react to the idea that we're expected to submit to the authority of difficult, and even corrupt, leaders?

In what ways has this principle been proven true in your experience?  
When have you failed to submit and experienced negative consequences as a result?

What do you think it looks like to submit to God and an ungodly leader?  
How should we respond to leaders who try to lead us away from God's authority?

Have you ever witnessed a leader abuse their power in a way that hurt themselves and/or others?  
In what ways did that situation affect you?

How can we trust God even when we're experiencing unfairness or injustice?  
What does it look like to remain faithful to God when we're the subject of unfair authority?

Is it ever permissible to disobey an authority figure?  
If so, under what circumstances?

Solomon's conclusion in verse 10 is the same as it's been throughout the book of Ecclesiastes: everything is meaningless. Submission, injustice, wisdom, folly, it's all meaningless, in his view, because those who submit sometimes experience injustice; those who don't sometimes experience good fortune; the wise sometimes experience curses; and the foolish sometimes experience blessings.

Do these observations mean we can ignore Solomon's counsel about submission?

For what reasons?

How would you counsel someone who considered submission to authority meaningless?

How do you counsel yourself when these thoughts arise?

How do you react to the reality that wicked people often do live a long time?

What might it say about God that he often allows the wicked to live long lives?

In your experience, when have you noticed Solomon's observations proven true?

How do you cope with that kind of injustice?

Do you think Solomon's "solution" to the meaninglessness of life is sufficient? Why, or why not?

In what ways is it freeing to not have to find meaning in a broken world?

In the final verses of Ecclesiastes 8, Solomon riffs on how incomprehensible life "under the sun" is. Part of what makes life so frustrating, he suggests, is not that life is devoid of meaning but that its meaning is beyond our ability to comprehend.

Which of these ideas resonates with you more: that life is utterly meaningless or that we can't fully comprehend its meaning? Why?

How should we respond to the incomprehensibility of life's meaning?

Who are the leaders in your life?

How well would you say you submit to them?

What could it look like to submit to their authority this week?

#### LAST WORD

Today, submitting to an authority figure is often viewed negatively. Blindly following our leaders is seen as weak, especially when leadership is riddled with poor decisions or shows evidence of corruption. While there is a time for dissent and standing up to leaders, the biblical pattern is one of submission. God instructs us to honor and obey those who exercise authority over us and means to reward us for it.

Think of the authority figures in your life. What would it look like for you to honor them, support them, and point them to God's greater authority?