

2023 Spring Break Spiritual Day

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Introduction: How to Relate to Authority

Objective

To show that the Holy Scripture and the Commandments of God necessitate that a true Christian abides by the authorities in his life

Key Verse

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1)

Body

- What authorities might we have in our life?
 - Our parents
 - Our father the priest/bishop
 - Our boss at work
 - Our teacher/principal/dean at school
 - Our Sunday School Servants
 - The government and law enforcement officers
 - The owner or manager of a business you are at or a house you are visiting
- One day, you will find that you have authority in something.
 - You might become a parent
 - You might become a Sunday School Servant
 - You might become a priest
 - You might become a manager or leader at work
- How does one become an authority?
 - "Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Matthew 25:23)
 - One is faithful in little things before being entrusted in big things
 - Someone who does not know how to treat his parents, will find it difficult to get married and will not be ready to bring up children
 - Someone who is not working hard at work, will not get promoted to a manager or leader position
 - Someone who is breaking the law, will never become a law enforcement officer or a politician and may even find difficulty advancing his career
 - Someone who is not faithful or committed in serving God, will not be entrusted with the service of God's children
 - Etc.

- Sometimes we are looking ahead to when I am finally in a position of authority - when I'm the boss - when I don't have to answer to anyone... but to get there, you must first learn to be a disciple and to submit to the authorities God has placed in your life.
- It is not about being a slave to someone else, or being UNDER someone else, but about putting yourself under someone else as a disciple.
 - When you go to school, you are discipling under a teacher in a certain subject
 - When you come to church, you are discipling under some priest and some servants
 - In all the rest of your time growing up, you are discipling under your parents... this is why people grow up to be similar to their parents
- Let's read Romans 13:1-5 together
 - ¹ Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.
 - Authorities are appointed in your life by God
- Introducing our Stations
 - Authority of Parents
 - Authority of the Church
 - Authority of Scripture
 - Authority of the Law
- What if there is a conflict?
 - What do I do if the law says to do something, but God says not to?
 - What do I do if my parents say to do something, but God says not to?
 - Will the Scripture tell me to do something that is against God's commandment?
 - Will the Church tell me to do something that is against God's commandment?
 - In all cases, remember that the Supreme Authority is God's Authority. The Authority of God is above all other authorities. If there is a situation where there is a conflict of authority, we must give the first priority to the authority of God
 - St Theodore of Shotep had a Christian father and a pagan mother. His mother wanted him to be educated in the pagan temple, but his father refused. His mother drove away his father and kept little Theodore with her. His father kept praying for him. When the child grew, he had learned philosophy and wisdom and literature and he went to a bishop to be baptized. His mother heard and was so upset but he did not mind her.

- If the Scripture is telling you to do something that is against God's commandment, then it is not the Scripture but a faulty interpretation of the Scripture. Nowadays many people in the world claim that the Bible commands us to go and slaughter nations of idol worshippers, but of course that is completely contrary to the Scripture. Rather it is people taking the stories in the Old Testament history out of context in order to distort God's message.
- The Church and the hierarchy of the Church will never intentionally tell you to do something against God's commandment. Bishops and priests and servants are human and will make mistakes, but if you find yourself in a position where someone is telling you to do something that you don't feel is right, it is good to seek counsel from your father of confession or another father priest.

Application

Contemplation

Resources

Station 1: Authority of Parents

Objective:

- What authority do my parents have over me?
- Why do they have this authority?
- How can I deal with this authority?

Key Verse:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Ephesians 6:1

Outline:

- **What authority do my parents have over me?**
 - **My Health & well-being**
 - **Physical**
 - Making sure you are fed and nurtured
 - Doctor's visits, providing medicine when needed
 - Sign you up for sports
 - Giving you instructions when it comes to over-eating and junk food
 - Making sure you don't smoke / do drugs
 - **Mental**
 - Just like your physical health, your parents are responsible for your mental well-being also
 - Your mental health and anything that may affect it
 - Relationships
 - Screen time
 - Interactions with other
 - **Behavioral**
 - They need to make sure you don't grow up with behavioral problems
 - Being violent or aggressive
 - Being disrespectful to others
 - Disrespecting authorities
 - **My Education**
 - Making sure you are receiving adequate education
 - Education impacts your thoughts and decisions - receiving proper education impacts your future decisions
 - Ensuring that you will have a meaningful and comfortable career as an adult when you have a good degree
 - **My Spiritual life**

- Review the commandment to parents after confirmation
- "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." Deut 6:6-7

- **Why do they have this authority?**

- **Children are a talent from God**
 - "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6
 - They will an account about you before the Lord
- **Responsible before the law**
 - They are responsible before the law to keep you well, healthy, educated, secure (away from dangerous environments)
 - They will face consequences if they lack in any of these responsibilities
 - These consequences may be as severe as losing you custody
- **Responsible before the society, country, and humanity**
 - Parents are responsible to raise children who are good for the society in general
 - They have a responsibility to bring children who are functioning members of society
 - They have a responsibility to bring children who love their country and willing to serve it
 - They have a responsibility to bring children who are helpful to humanity in general with their contribution in any fields
 - Think of St Paul's parents, or St Anthony's parents, how about Tesla's parents, or C.S. Lewis' parents, even the parents of Daniel Hale Williams who was the first cardiologist to perform open heart surgery
 - Their parents are happy and proud because their children had a great contribution to the whole world
 - "The father of a righteous child has great joy; a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him. May your father and mother rejoice. may she who gave you birth be joyful!" Proverbs 23:24-25

- **How can I deal with this authority?**

- **Understand**
 - Many times we focus so much on wanting our parents to understand us but do we understand them
 - Do we understand their intention when they ask us to do something?
 - Your parents have your best interest before their eyes at all times - even if what they are asking is hard to do, be assured that it is for your benefit

- Understand that they are striving to be honest and faithful in their responsibility towards you
- **Love**
 - "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8
 - When we understand that their intention is always good we will be more forgiving to their mistakes
 - When we truly love them, it will be easier to overlook some mistakes
 - Yes they may be harsh at times, maybe impatient at times, but I love them
 - Pray that may God put the love of your parents in your heart in spite of their faults or shortcomings
- **Respect**
 - "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12
 - Respect in speech, body language, doing what you're asked to do.
- **Obey**
 - "A fool despises his father's instruction, But he who receives correction is prudent." Proverbs
 - "My son, keep your father's command, And do not forsake the law of your mother." Proverbs 6:20
 - "Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." Proverbs 23:22
 - *Review the parable of the two sons - Matthew 21:28-32*
- **Appreciate**
 - Appreciate the sacrifice your parents are doing for your sake
 - Giving rides, providing food and shelter, signing up for practices, buying you \$300 shoes, etc.
 - The simplest form of appreciation is to be thankful
 - "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18
 - "Do all things without complaining and disputing" Philippians 2:14
 - "Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned." James 5:9
- Conclude with the concept of **authority of love**

Authority of Love

- "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18
- The authority of love is a Biblical concept and it is the highest level of authority
- When you love someone, you want to do what is pleasing to them, you want to make them happy
- You obey who you love out of love and respect not out of fear
- Responding to the authority of love is more spiritually mature than responding to any other form of authority

- Even though that person cannot force me to do something, I listen to him because I love him

Station 2: Authority of the Church

Objective:

- **What is the authority of the Church?**
- **Where did the Church get this authority from?**
- **How can I deal with this authority?**

Key Verse:

"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls" Hebrews 13:17

Outline:

What is the authority of the Church?

- Before His ascension, the Lord Jesus gave a command to His Apostles, we call it "the Great Commission" He said: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen." Matthew 28:18-20
- When we look at this command we see that that Lord Jesus declares His authority and gives authority to His Apostles (and their successors) as heads of the Church .. He said to them
- **"Make disciples" (Lead and govern)**
 - The Lord Jesus gave the Church the authority to "Make disciples" ... so what is a disciple? a follower of the Lord Jesus
 - The same as a mother, the Church births us (through baptism), feeds us (the word of God), nurtures us (through the Eucharist), cares for our well-being (through repentance and confession), cares for us when we are sick (through unction of the sick) and raises us up to grow in our love to our Father (through prayers, praises, and fasting)
 - Just as the mother discipline her children, the Church also can discipline us for the sake of our salvation and spiritual well being
 - It is the Church's responsibility to point out our wrongdoing in order to correct us
 - It is the Church's responsibility to give us advise when we need it
 - It is the Church's responsibility to teaches us how to behave as true disciples
 - The Church has the ultimate responsibility to lead the believers to the kingdom of heaven, therefore the Church has the authority to Convince, rebuke, exhort the

believers when needed in order to put them on the right track.

- When the Church entrusts someone to do a particular service, the Church must hold that person accountable (i.e. discuss deaconship)
- **"Baptizing them" (Sanctify (Administer Sacraments))**
 - From the grace of the New Testament is that we have the Holy Spirit in us and working with us
 - The Church was entrusted to give us the Holy Spirit and to give us the means by which we receive His grace
 - These means are the Holy Sacraments that our Lord Jesus instituted
 - The Church's role is to administer these sacraments and prepare the believers to be able to receive them
 - i.e. by fasting, prayers, etc.
- **"Teaching them" (Teaching and preaching)**
 - From the authority of the Church also is to preach and teach the word of God
 - The Church to preach the Truth and spread it and be a reference to it
 - *I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.* 1 Tim 3:15
 - The Church is entrusted to teach us the faith and to give us commandments to live by (i.e. the difference between Holy and common)
- **Binding and loosing**
 - ○ ○ "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19)
 - "And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained." John 20:22-23
 - When abouna comes and tells me I did something wrong, I must listen and apply his advise
- **Judging between the believers**
 - ○ ○ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-18
 - If I have a disagreement with a brother, go to the Church, involve a servant or abouna. Don't take matters in your own hands
 - Whatever the Church both of you must obey

Why did the Church get this authority from?

- **As God, our Lord Jesus has authority over everything**
 - "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Matthew 28:18

- And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Ephesians 1:22-23

- **The Lord Jesus gave an authority to His apostles**

- "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you." (John 20:21)
- "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen." Matthew 28:18-20

- **Apostolic succession**

- The apostles gave this authority to their successors through laying of the hands (ordinations)
- Meaning that the authority that the Lord Jesus gave to His Apostles, St Mark gave it to St Anianus,, all the way to Pope Shenouda who gave this authority to all the bishops he ordained (including Pope Tawadros)
- The bishops gave this authority to the priests they ordain
- The bishops and the father the priest give some authority to those who serve in different capacities according to their capacity

- **Hierarchy of the church**

- From this we understand that our Church is established on hierarchy
- This hierarchy is not like the military but one built of of fatherhood and sonship
- Hierarchy built on discipleship
- Hierarchy built on love and respect
- Therefore the main authority the we have in the Church is the authority of love \
 - **Authority of Love**
 - "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18
 - The authority of love is a Biblical concept and it is the highest level of authority
 - When you love someone, you want to do what is pleasing to them, you want to make them happy
 - You obey who you love out of love and respect not out of fear
 - Responding to the authority of love is more spiritually mature than responding to any other form of authority
 - Even though that person cannot force me to do something, I listen to him because I love him

How can I deal with this authority?

- **Understand**

- Understand that in the Church we are ONE family, we are the Body of Christ and Christ is the head
- Understand that in the Church everyone must serve the other, when you were a little child you were served by everyone, as you grow older you are expected to serve

others as well

- Understand that those who serve you, serve you out of love to the Lord and our of Love towards you as God's son
- Understand that those who serve you have no other intention but the salvation of your soul and you spiritual well-being
- Understand that the Church is a hospital for sinner not a museum for the saints, your servants, your father the priest, your father the bishop, all of them are humans and have weaknesses and out of your love towards God you can love them and forgive them if they were tough or harsh

- **Love**

- "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." (Mt 10:40)
- When we understand the intention of my father the priest and my servants is always good I will love and appreciate what they do for me
- Pray that may God put the love in your heart towards your Church family

- **Respect**

- ○ Respect God's house
 - Attire, language, actions, etc.
 - "Holiness adorns Your house, O Lord, forever." Psalm 93:5
 - Respect the service that the Church entrusted you with
- "And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and [d]admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13
- Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 1 Timothy 5:17

- **Obey**

- " Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls" Hebrews 13:17
- "He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." (Lk 10:16)
- Note: Give deaconship examples

- **Appreciate**

- Appreciate what your servants do for you, leaving their families and sometimes their jobs to serve you and create a healthy, spiritual, and fun environment for you
- Appreciate the Church that is always open for you and welcoming to your activities at any time
 - The simplest form of appreciation is to be thankful
 - "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18
 - "Do all things without complaining and disputing" Philippians 2:14
 - "Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned." James 5:9

- Conclude with the concept of **authority of love**

Station 3: Authority of Scripture

Objective:

- Characteristics of scriptures
- Authority of scriptures
- The blessings of scriptures
- How to approach scriptures

Key Verse:

"All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Outline:

Characteristics of Scriptures

- **It is the word of God**
 - "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit." 1 Peter 1:20-21
 - God communicated with man in various ways
 - The Bible is God's revelation to mankind
 - It is how God communicates with us - It is the answer to our prayers
- **It is everlasting**
 - Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
Matthew 24:35
- **Declare the Truth**
 - *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Tim 3:15
 - Where do we find the ultimate truth? If we have different opinions about what is the truth who would judge between us? ... Scriptures
- **It is effective and transforming**
 - "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11
 - God's words are effective and transforming; even if we don't fully understand it -
Read it
 - Tell the story of the basket that gets cleaned by the sea water
- **We will give account for it**

- " For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account." Hebrews 4:12-13
- We will be judged according to what is in the Bible, according to the commandments that we followed and what we did not follow
- Not knowing the law does not exonerate a criminal from his crime

The authority of Scriptures

"All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

1. Doctrine

- We learn the faith from the Bible
- We understand God's plan for mankind
- We learn God's commandments

2. Reproof

- The Bible tells us convicts us of sin

3. Correction

- The Bible tells us what we need to correct and change in our life for the sake of our salvation

4. Instruction

- The Bible teaches us how to live a righteous life according to the Lord's commandments

Blessings of scriptures

• God's words are life giving

- My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹ Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; ²² For they *are* life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. ²³ Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life. Proverbs 4:20-23

• It helps us in our spiritual struggle

- Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. psalms 119:105
- How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. Psalm 119:9
- Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. 119:11

• It gives hope

- " For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the ^[]_cpatience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. " Romans 15:4

• Leads to success

- ○ "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you^[]_a shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Joshua 1:8

- **It brings joy and gladness**

- ○ Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts. Jeremiah 15:16

How to approach scriptures

- When we read the Bible, our reading should be ...
 - **With understanding**
 - When you read the Bible do not read like a robot - Read with understanding
 - Slowly
 - Repeat when needed
 - Stop and ask or look up words you do not understand
 - Make sure you understand the whole message
 - Use commentary - attend Bible study
 - **In a spirit of obedience**
 - "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Deuteronomy 4:2
 - But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22
 - "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Luke 11:28
 - **In a spirit of prayer**
 - Turn your Bible reading into prayers
 - Reading about faithfulness - ask the Lord to help you be faithful in your life
 - Reading Moses crossing the Red Sea with the Israelites - ask the Lord to help you cross hardships in your life
 - Reading the parable of the wise and foolish virgins - ask the Lord to help you be always ready
 - **Personal**
 - Take what you read and apply it to yourself not others
 - Consider your reading a direct message from the Lord to you
 - Keep God's promises they never fail
 - Apply what you read to your life

Station 4: Authority of the Law

Objective

- A greater appreciation for the law of the land
- A greater appreciation for our law enforcement officer
- To know that you are not alone in the temptations you are dealing with, but that you can overcome them

Key Verse

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1)

Location

This station will be outside at Deputy Youssef's patrol vehicle

Body

- Read Romans 13:1-7
 - ¹ Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.
- The Scripture is clear about obeying the authority of the government.
 - The authorities are allowed to govern by God
 - It is God's commandment to obey them
 - The people who usually fear the authorities are those who do something bad (see epistle to Romans above), but Christians don't do bad things...
- Christ subjected Himself to the Roman Empire's rule and followed their laws and paid their taxes
 - Read Mark 12:13-17
 - ¹³ Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in *His* words. ¹⁴ When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of

men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"

But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see *it*." ¹⁶ So they brought *it*.

And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription *is* this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's."

¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

And they marveled at Him.

- Read Matthew 17:24-27

- ²⁴ When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?"

- ²⁵ He said, "Yes."

- And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?"

- ²⁶ Peter said to Him, "From strangers."

- Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. ²⁷ Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

- The Scripture does not give details about our social behavior (i.e. there is no Bible verse that says to wear a seat belt while driving) but specifies that we abide by the law of the land
- We have a guest speaker with us today for this station, Deputy Andrew Youssef. He's with the Titusville Sheriff's department and as you can clearly see, he's a Law Enforcement Officer. His job is to enforce the law and keep our communities safe. I asked him to come here today to speak to us about some of the common pitfalls that High School Boys are falling into and how to avoid them.