

# CHAPTER 12



## RESPECTING AUTHORITY—IT REALLY IS BLACK AND WHITE

Biblical Lessons for Students, Athletes & More

Individual or Group Experience

### FOCAL VERSE

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. Hebrews 13:17 (NIV)

### WISE WORDS

"Our respect for authority is a mirror image of our respect toward God."  
Kari Kieper

### Introduction

Respecting authority is getting more and more difficult as people in positions of authority get farther away from core ethical values, much less basic, biblical principles. Consequently, it has led to a lack of trust and confidence in government officials, law enforcement, school boards, public media, etc. Therefore, for the sake of this session, let's put our personal views aside as we use God's inspired Word to guide our conversation.

Let's start with a few discussion questions regarding referees and officials.

- Have you ever considered a referee to be your authority figure?
- Do you think referees have the power to determine the outcome of a game? Why or why not?
- What is your overall opinion of referees?

### Page 77

Read Hebrews 13:17 at the top of the page. Before digging into this lesson, let's unpack this verse in its natural phases.

- Phase 1:
  - "Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority,"
    - **Whom do you consider authority figures in your life?** (*parents, teachers, coaches, boss, police, principals, etc*).
    - **Did "God" make your list?** *He is our principle authority figure!*
    - **Do you tend to find it difficult or natural to submit** (comply, accept, surrender) **to authority?**
    - **Does your willingness to comply depend on the personality, position, or leadership style of the authority figure?** Explain.

*But first...*

- Share about a recent opportunity when you allowed God to use you as a tool. What did that look like?

### au·thor·i·ty

the power to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.



Chapter twelve can overflow into social or political matters if you aren't intentional about keeping the conversation closely related to referees. If you chose to allow controversial issues into this discussion, tread very carefully! Always use God's Word as the standard.

- **Phase 2**

- "...because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account."
  - Protecting the safety of players is a significant responsibility of officials. They are charged with enforcing the rules, and many of those rules are in place to make the game safe. However, injuries will occur regardless of officials' diligence in enforcing rules. Referees will only be held liable for injuries if there was gross negligence to exercise reasonable care during a game.
  - In Romans 14:12, we're told that each one of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Similarly, officials get evaluated by governing authorities and must give an account for their performance. However, just like you and me, *referees are not perfect and they will certainly miss calls and make mistakes.*
  - **Have you ever had a perfect game? Do you ever miss shots? Who holds you accountable for your mistakes?** Just a thought: considering players make mistakes and miss shots, wouldn't it be fair to say that referees will make mistakes and miss calls too?
  - **Do you agree with the following statement?** With the exception of crucial plays down the stretch, or the repetitive botching of calls, referees are rarely a significant factor in a team's winning or losing, regardless of what the fans may believe.

According to the NBA Referees Twitter account, @OfficialNBARefs, "*NBA referees are held accountable and judged by the NBA (and by NBA coaches and players) every single time they blow the whistle - and when they do not - and are promoted and punished accordingly.*"



- **Phase 3**

- "*Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.*"
  - In March, 2020, there were two separate incidents at Milwaukee high school basketball games in which referees found their own safety at risk. One athlete rushed a referee after his team lost by 1-point in triple overtime. He had to be restrained by several others on the court. In a separate incident, a referee was hit in the head with a full bottle of water from a spectator. Sadly, these types of occurrences are not isolated to the city of Milwaukee or high school games.
  - On January 5, 2022, a state representative, (who will remain unnamed), tried to fight and "de-pants" a high school basketball referee. He later apologized for losing his temper.
- The incidents above illustrate the burden that referees can carry. **Practically speaking, how can coaches, players, parents, and fans be influential in creating an atmosphere that reduces the burden for referees and allows for more joy or pleasure?**



*Respect for ourselves guides  
our morals; respect for others  
guides our manners.*

*Laurence Sterne*

## Page 77

**Begin reading chapter 12. Pause at the middle of page 79 to reflect on (or discuss) the following quotes:**

- *"Respecting others has to do with your character, and being worthy of respect as to do with theirs."*
- *"Our respect for authority is a mirror image of our respect toward God."*
- **Questions to consider:**
  - Does your character reflect respect for others, even if you disagree with their beliefs or lifestyle?
  - Does your respect for others adequately represent your respect for God?
  - Do you think your character changes when you step on or off the court? In other words, does your character change with your environment?

## Page 80

**Read the quote by a referee named "Tom" at the top of page 80.**



*"Being a referee is hard. Let's put that right out there. You are signing up for a job where the expectation is that you will get yelled at, often unjustifiably, and you're supposed to not react and continue to do your job. It's the hardest job I have ever had and may ever have."*

- **Whether you're a coach, player, parent, or spectator, what is your response to this quote? Does it prompt you to treat referees with a bit more compassion or thoughtfulness?**

If you are walking consistently with Christ, your reactions, responses, speech, and body language should be noticeably different on the court (and off) than your peers, teammates, and opponents who do not have a relationship with Christ. *Whatever* your attitude is towards referees and authority figures, I'm sure we all have areas of improvement!

## Chalk Talk

Read through each section. Ponder or discuss how you might practically apply this lesson.

## Personal Training Session (Page 81)

- Read Romans 13:1-5. How can you apply these passages on submitting to governing authorities to your own life?
- Do you ever question the authority of your coach, parents, teachers, referees or other authority figures in your life? Are there situations when it's justifiable to question their authority? Explain.
- How is it possible to respond respectfully to a person whom you don't respect? (Page 79)

## Page 82

- End with the Post Game Prayer or invite someone to close in prayer if you're in a group setting.

## Closing Comments

- If you are involved in an organized sport, be intentional about showing an extra measure of respect and grace to your leaders and/or officials. Remember, it reveals a lot about your character!
- Our next session will address composing yourself while under pressure, both personally and spiritually.