

# *Pathway*

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

## **Introduction — *Authority***

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“How can I be independent if I have to do what everybody else is telling me to do?” This is a paradoxical question asked by many frustrated teens. Many don't realize that at the same time they seek independence from authority figures, they seek acceptance from peers which forces them to conform. What is the key to freedom and independence? What is the proper response to authority? This *Pathway* study provides some surprising answers. Get ready to discover truths provided by God's Word which you could never have arrived at on your own.

## DAY ONE — Authority

**Hiding It in My Heart:** A Christian once said of the Bible: “This Book will keep you from sin — or sin will keep you from this Book.” Today, memorize Psalm 119:11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.*

**Verse to think about:** *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food (Job 23:12).*

**PRAYER:** Before you try to understand truths from God’s Word, pray as David did in Psalm 119:18: *Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.* Ask God to help you both understand and obey His Word.

## Who Says?

Beth was really angry! Her last hour teacher had kept her after class because he thought she was being sarcastic. Then on the way home, she got a speeding ticket — and she was only going 10 over the limit! Then her mom yelled at her about the ticket and for getting home late. She felt everyone was treating her like a little kid!

Beth sometimes feels like a child. Sometimes she feels like an adult. Often, these feelings are triggered by how others treat her. Other times, she is not reacting to people, but simply feels a certain way on her own. Beth yearns for the freedom and independence of adulthood, but retains a child’s attitude toward responsibility.

As you mature, you’re expected to assume more responsibility. This means that you cannot always do what you want to do, but rather what you’re supposed to do. That is, you have to answer to someone in authority over you, like your parents, teachers, or other adults. This may cause some confusion because it seems to conflict with your desire to become independent. Actually, it’s a package deal; independence comes to those who are willing to assume responsibility. It may seem like a “catch-22,” but freedom comes to those who are willing to submit to authority.

How do these people treat you?

Parents: \_\_\_ Always as an adult \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Never

Teachers: \_\_\_ Always as an adult \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Never

Youth sponsor: \_\_\_ Always as an adult \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Never

**A Look in the Book:** A Christian has a big advantage over a person who hasn’t trusted the Lord. A believer can enjoy God’s special blessings. Happiness and satisfaction beyond what the unsaved may ever enjoy are available to you if you learn to obey God’s Word, the Bible. Turn to Psalm 119 and look at the verses listed below. Then write what God’s Word can do for you.

Psalm 119:11: *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.*

Psalm 119:9: *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word.*

Psalm 119:165: *Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*

You probably know that the Bible is God’s Word. But maybe you’ve never considered it to be the primary way God has to help you, to guide you, to communicate with you. You’ve probably heard that “God loves you.” Yet, you don’t hear Him tell you so personally, unless you read His Word for yourself.

Because the Bible is God’s Word, what it says goes. Someone who bosses you around without any right is just a bully. But some people have God-given authority, and God’s Word says they are to be obeyed. If you want to know who’s just a bully, and who has God’s authority, you have to know what the Bible says!

What do you think? What right do these people have to tell you what to do? In the list below check from where you think their authority comes.

Parents: \_\_\_ Man-made authority \_\_\_ Authority from God \_\_\_ Don’t know

Teachers: \_\_\_ Man-made authority \_\_\_ Authority from God \_\_\_ Don’t know

Pastors: \_\_\_ Man-made authority \_\_\_ Authority from God \_\_\_ Don’t know

Policemen: \_\_\_ Man-made authority \_\_\_ Authority from God \_\_\_ Don’t know

Later this week, you will check your answers against God’s Word. That’s the final authority!

## DAY TWO — Authority

**PRAYER:** Think about whom God has placed in authority over you. Also, think about those over whom you have authority, or will have, some day. Pray that the Lord will show you how to help without bossing. Pray also that He will make it easy for you to respect the authority of those over you.

**Verse to think about:** *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them (Ecc. 12:1).*

## God Is Bigger than Everybody!

Do you ever try to tell your little brothers or sisters what to do? Have you ever told them to do something for you? Do they ignore you? Unless you've earned their respect, or they're afraid of you, they probably don't pay much attention. But when your parents tell them to do, or not to do, something, that's probably different.

Have you ever wondered who decides who gets to be in charge of whom? You know your parents are in charge of the family. But where did they get their authority? Is it just because parents are older than their kids?

Where do you think your parents get their authority?

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**A Look in the Book:** The Bible says God is the authority over all, and no one else has authority unless God gives it to him.

Imagine you're in school. After you open your locker, a friend pushes you aside and borrows your sweater without asking. How would you feel? Or suppose you bought an old Mustang and rebuilt the engine, so that it ran just right. Your friend would have no right to take the car out of your garage and go racing, would he? It'd be your car.

God created everything in this world (Gen. 1:31; Ex. 20:11), and God holds the whole universe together by His power. He keeps everything running (Col. 1:16-17). God is always God over all His creation. If people rebel against God, they can do so only because God allows them to.

Even Christians can choose to rebel against God. But it makes more sense to follow what the Bible says. There you can find out why God made you the way He did (and what His will is for your life).

Revelation 4:11 tells of a wonderful chorus that will be sung in heaven. The song in one short line tells the reason why God created all things, and why all things continue to exist.

Look up this verse and complete it here.

... for \_\_\_\_\_ they are and were created.

God, the Creator, has authority over all. Although you have the ability to make your own decisions, sometimes you will make bad choices. God created you with the ability to turn your back on Him, but His desire is that you do right, and stay close to Him.

Have you ever rebelled against God's authority by doing something you knew was wrong? What happened?

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## DAY THREE — Authority

**Verse to think about:** *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5).*

**PRAYER:** Use the last verse of Psalm 19 as your prayer to God as you try to please Him with your attitude of submission. *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

## Why Obey?

John wasn't sure he really wanted to talk to his grandfather. But he didn't have much choice, since they were stuck in a car together. And he figured Grandpa meant well, even if he was pretty out-of-date.

"I'm 16, Grandpa, and I'm tired of the way my parents are always telling me what to do. They want to run my life."

"John, you don't have to listen to me. There's something you should know, though. When your dad was growing up, he had to learn how to obey, just like you. We didn't run his life, but he didn't always get his own way, either. I assure you, John, your dad does understand what you're going through. He went through it himself."

"Yeah, I know. But when a guy's my age, I think he should be allowed to do whatever he thinks is OK to do."

"John, there's one big thing that you need to learn. When you were little, you obeyed because you really didn't have any choice. As a child, you couldn't make your own decisions. Now, as a teenager, you need to learn to obey simply because it is right to obey. If you can't learn to obey your earthly parents, how can you ever expect to obey God, your heavenly Father?"

"Look, 10 years from now, your dad won't remind you to drive the speed limit, or get up and go to work on time, or file your income tax. If those things get done, it will be because you decide to do what's right because it is right. Now, when you're a teen, you're starting out on your own more and more. You need to get into the habit of obeying just because it is right."

**A Look in the Book:** John wasn't sure he agreed with his grandfather. But he had to think about it. Look up the following verses and then write the main point of each one.

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

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Ephesians 6:2: *Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise.*

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Colossians 3:20: *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*

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Ephesians 6:4: *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

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Genesis 18:19: *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.*

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God's Word teaches Christians to submit themselves to those in authority over them. To submit means to obey. But it also means much more. It means to do (and not do) all that would best please that person over you. Obedience to the authorities under God is supposed to be of the same quality as obedience to God Himself.

The Bible even teaches obedience to authority when the authority is ungodly (or against God). (See 1 Peter 2:18-20; 3:1-2.) It is only when a parent or other authority commands you to sin, that you must then disobey that authority in order to obey God, the highest authority.

God wants so much for you to learn obedience. Your teen years are the testing ground. Now you can choose to obey because it is right.

## DAY FOUR — Authority

**Verses to think about:** *Feed the flock of God which is among you ... neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples [examples or models] to the flock (1 Pet. 5:2-3).*

**PRAYER:** Ask God to help and guide all those in authority over you. Then pray for yourself, that you will accept authority responsibly. Also pray that you will be able to care for those people God may put under you.

## Authority Means Responsibility

Krissy and Beth were shooting baskets in the church gym one afternoon after school. On his way out for the day, the pastor stopped to talk with them. After he left, Krissy asked, "Have you ever noticed how worn out our pastor seems? He's not that old, either. He looks like he's carrying the whole world's worries on his back!"

"Well," Beth said. "I guess a lot of people in the church have problems, and he gets stuck with them all."

"Yeah, I suppose so. But it shouldn't be that hard on him. I mean, they're not really his problems."

"I don't know ... Maybe he feels like he's going to have to answer for us, too, someday."

**A Look in the Book:** In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul goes through a long list of things he suffered in the Lord's service — beatings, shipwreck, robbery, weariness, pain, hunger, thirst, cold. Then look what he says in verse 28: *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.* Caring for the people of the churches he had started was Paul's heaviest burden.

In Acts 20, Paul reminds the church elders at Ephesus how he had cared for them and helped build up their group of believers. Twice in just a few verses Paul mentions his tears. *Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears ... (Acts 20:19). ... I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:31).*

Look up the following verses. Write two things which each verse commands you to do.

Hebrews 13:7: *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

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Hebrews 13:17: *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

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When people have authority, the Bible tells us that God will hold them responsible for how they use that authority. Parents are responsible for their children, and they will answer to God for how they raise their children. Government officials are over great groups of people, but the Bible says they, too, are God's ministers or instruments of His judgment (Rom. 13:4). They will surely answer to God for how they use their authority. A pastor has responsibility over God's people by teaching and preaching God's Word, personal counseling, and by leading the ministries of the church. But the pastor will give account to God for how well he cared for those people.

So, if you are faithful in God's service, you will get praise from God, and so will your pastor. But if you are disobedient to God's Word, you will be ashamed before the Lord, and your pastor will be unable to give a good account with joy.

**On My Own:** Maybe you never realized how your pastor carries the burden of caring for the people of your church. Sometime this week, visit your pastor. Tell him you've just read in Hebrews 13 how pastors must give account for the people under their care. Tell him you'll be praying for him. Ask what he'd like you to pray for specifically. Write his prayer request here:

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## DAY FIVE — Authority

**Verse to think about:** ... *Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed (Rom. 10:11).*

**PRAYER:** Thank the Lord for His free gift of salvation. Pray that God will always help you to be careful not to assume that your friends and family already know how to be saved. Pray for boldness to ask your friends if they are sure of heaven.

## Sure of Heaven?

Seventeen-year-old Bobby was confused. Everyone in his church thought he was a Christian. Many people let him know that they expected him to live like a Christian. Others talked to him about serving the Lord.

But Bobby had never trusted Christ as his Savior. His parents were believers. Yet somehow, like everyone else, they also just assumed Bobby was a Christian. No one had ever taken the time to talk with Bobby and help him know for sure what being a Christian was all about.

**A Look in the Book:** Do you know that you can be sure you're a Christian? If you're positive you're a Christian, write how you know for sure on the lines below. If you're not sure, describe what you think is your present relationship with the Lord.

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In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we read that when Jesus came to earth, His own people, the Jews, did not receive Him (vs. 10-11). But verse 12 says, *But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.* The word translated "power" means authority. Jesus has given to all who receive Him the authority (right) to be children of God. And if receiving Him is not plain enough, He explains that, too — it means to believe on His name.

What's this all about? Well, ever since Adam and Eve, everyone has been separated from God by sin. But Jesus, God's Son, came to make a way for man and God to be together forever. Jesus came to remove that separation our sin has caused. He did this by taking the punishment for our sin. Jesus suffered, bled, and died on the cross for you. Nothing you could ever do would pay the penalty for your sin and bring you back to God. But Jesus' death was enough for you, and for all mankind.

Jesus' name means Savior (not example, not teacher — but Savior). Jesus does all the work of salvation. You can only receive it as a free gift. To *believe on His name* is to trust Jesus as your own Savior, the One who can and will take you all the way to heaven.

Read 1 John 5:13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* Answer these questions:

To whom is this written? \_\_\_\_\_

What may they know? \_\_\_\_\_

When do they get it? \_\_\_\_\_

When does it end? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know that you have eternal life? \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes you might not feel really good, and sometimes you may not do the things you should. But you can be sure you are a Christian. Being a Christian is not based on how you feel, or on what you do. You have the authority of Jesus Christ, and God's Word, the Bible, to say you are a Christian. If you have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, then He is your Savior. He paid the penalty for your sins when He died on the cross.

## DAY SIX — Authority

**Hiding It in My Heart:** Try to memorize 1 Corinthians 9:19 today or this weekend. *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

**PRAYER:** Thank God for the free salvation He's given you. Also thank Him that He chooses to use regular people, like you, to do His work now. Pray that He will help you to live so that what you say is not contradicted by what you do.

## Under Authority — Liberty!

"It's Saturday! I can sleep until noon, watch TV all afternoon, and party all night. Nobody tells me what to do today!" Because he's saved, Bill has the idea that it doesn't matter what he does. He's gonna try to get all the kicks there are to get! But Bill is miserable.

"It's Saturday! I've got to read my Bible, help Mom in the house, clean up around the church, visit those bus kids I promised to visit, read my Sunday School lesson ..." Although Sherri is saved, she worries that God will not love her unless she really works and does her best to keep the Commandments. Sherri is miserable, too. Now think about your own life. Are you more like Bill, or like Sherri, or somewhere in between?

**A Look in the Book:** Paul wrote the Book of Galatians as an explanation for some Christians who had ideas like Bill and Sherri. Galatians 5:13 has a word for Bill: *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.* Living in sin is not liberty. It is a hard kind of slavery. Christian liberty is not permission to sin. It is the freedom to serve God, and to serve one another.

God will convict Bill, so that Bill will not be happy with his attempt to get away with all kinds of careless living.

Galatians has a word for Sherri, too. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1).* This *yoke of bondage* refers to all the commandments of the Old Testament Law. As Christians, we've been made free from the Law. A Christian teen like Sherri is mistaken. She's wrong to think that God is satisfied with her efforts to keep the rules of the Old Testament. Sherri was saved by faith in Christ, not by being good and keeping the Law. And she's not "kept saved" by her good works either.

God will convict Sherri, too. His Word is very plain. The Law was nailed to the cross when Christ died (Col. 2:14). Believers are not under the Law — they are children of God (Gal. 3:23-26). It would be really sad if Sherri misled some people into thinking that they must try to keep God's Law in order to remain saved.

Paul is a great example for you to imitate. Read his words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

Paul knew he was free from the Law and on his way to heaven. But he made himself a servant. He put himself under the authority of God's Word, and made himself a servant to *all men* — so that some might come to know the Lord and be saved.

Christian liberty gives you reason to serve. Because of your life, and the words you speak, will there be more people in heaven? Write your thoughts on this question here:

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