



Authority: Upsides and Downsides

Ecclesiastes 8:1-9

Listen! One of my main goals in life is to be in control—of just about everything.

- **My belief:** I can be in control of most of my life and a good portion of my world.
- **My additional belief:** When I am in control I am safe, no one can control me, and I do not need to depend on anyone.
- **Reality:** I don't control much and I cannot ensure safety or autonomy.

Question: What do I do with my deep commitment to be in control and my deep inability to be in control?

Wisdom (skillful and ethical living) shows up on a person's face. (v 1)

We obey authorities because of our commitment to God. (vv 2-6)

- Romans 13:1
- What about civil disobedience?

We lack authority (or control) over a lot of things in life, such as:

- ...the trouble in our lives. (v.6b)
- ...what will happen in the future. (v 7)
- ...when our spirit will leave our body and what day we will die. (v 8a)
- ...if we will be conscripted to go to war. (v 8b)
- ...how to escape the consequences of evil choices. (v 8c)
- ...people in authority that do harm to us or others. (v 9)

Answer: We do not control life so be wise, obey authority, and trust God.

“Walking Papers”

Practical helps for walking the Christian walk each day this week.

The point: We do not control life so be wise, obey authority, and trust God.

- **Today:** In what ways are you not being wise—not living with practical skill, not seeing life from God’s perspective, not living with ethical shrewdness? So, ...?
- **Monday:** Are there ways that you are regularly or periodically rebellious to authorities in your life? So, what do you need to do? What will you do?
- **Tuesday:** What are you afraid of in relation to the future? Make a list and take it to God. Take it to a trusted mentor for help too.
- **Wednesday:** Are you afraid of anything in relation to death? Make a list and take it to God. Take it to a trusted mentor for help too.
- **Thursday:** Are you afraid of anything in relation to war or evil? Make a list and take it to God. Take it to a trusted mentor for help too.
- **Friday:** Are you afraid of anything in relation to the authorities in your life? Make a list and take it to God. Take it to a trusted mentor for help too.
- **Saturday:** Create a small reminder in your life—a sticky note or a drawing or something—to remind yourself to trust God with uncontrollable things.

“Companionship Papers”

Dialogue questions for helping each other in the Christian walk this week.

GETTING STARTED:

- Briefly describe the greatest “control freak” you ever knew in your life.
- What are your biggest temptations in the area of “ensuring control?”

LOOK AT THE TEXT:

- Verses 1: In what sense does “wisdom cause a person’s face to beam?”
- Verse 2: What oath has the believer taken before God that relates to the command of the king? Where do kings get authority? Where does the Bible say that?
- Verses 5, 6: What is the meaning of the “proper time and procedure” in relation to the authorities in our lives? Are there additional Bible passages that come to mind in this regard?
- Verse 7: What is the source of our fascination with the future and our obsession to find out what is coming? How have men and women sought to find out? What do you think God wants us to know about the future? Why do you say that?

LIVE DIFFERENTLY (you can also use questions from the Walking Papers above):

- How can we pray for you and help you with control issues or fears in your life?
- How can we pray for you or counsel you with authority figures in your life?
- How can we pray for you and help you with regard to trusting God in the face of uncontrollable things?