

Under God's Order

For teens ages 12–14 · about 45–60 minutes · Moral Issues for Teens · theme **Authority & Obedience** · built on **Romans 13:1, Acts 5:29, Ephesians 6:1–2**

Your students live inside rules every day — curfews, classroom policies, coach's orders, youth-group expectations, and the unspoken pressure to treat adults like they're optional. Some roll their eyes at parents. Some assume government is always corrupt. Some tune out church leadership because "nobody gets me." A few have seen authority abused at home and wonder if obedience is just a tool for control. This session isn't boot-camp compliance — it's a clear look at where authority comes from, why God built order into the world, and what to do when a human authority tells you to sin.

Before you teach anything, pray.

Some students obey out of fear; some rebel out of pride; some have been hurt by adults who misused power. Ask the Spirit for wisdom to honor God without glorifying abuse, and for courage to name rebellion as a heart problem without shaming students who need safe adults. You are handing them a standard they can live by — not performing a power lecture.

The heart of the lesson

All authority ultimately comes from God because He is our Maker (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 95:6). **Authority** means the right to command and the power to act — and God did not keep every decision for Himself. He delegated authority in three spheres: the **home** (Genesis 18:19; Luke 2:51; Ephesians 5:22–24; 6:1–4), the **government** (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17), and the **church** (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2). Respect and obedience are not personality traits — they are responses to God's order.

All authority comes from God — honor it unless it commands sin.

That last clause matters. Peter and the apostles said, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). God's authority is highest. When human authority commands what God forbids — or forbids what God commands — you honor God by refusing. That is not rebellion; rebellion is a proud heart that rejects rightful order because it wants to be its own god (Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2).

Scripture treats disrespect toward parents and contempt for rulers as serious sin (Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 21:18–21; Proverbs 6:20).

Obey God first. Honor people under Him.

ROMANS 13:1

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."

ACTS 5:29

"We must obey God rather than men."

How the session flows

- 1 Chain-of-command hook.** God at the top; delegated authority below. ~7 min
- 2 God's order teaching.** Three spheres; Acts 5:29; rebellion vs. honor. ~12 min
- 3 Play the game.** "Honor or Rebel?" two-team showdown. ~12–15 min
- 4 Quiet honesty.** Reference card, filled in privately. ~5 min
- 5 Worksheet.** In class or take-home reinforcement. ~15 min
- 6 Close with prayer.** Invitation to honor God by honoring rightful authority. ~8 min

You'll want a screen for the game, printed reference cards and worksheets, pens, and optional index cards for the chain-of-command hook. Be ready to respond with care if a student discloses abusive authority at home — submission never licenses harm, and you may need to involve appropriate help.

Leading it, part by part

Chain-of-command hook

Draw or display a simple ladder: **God** at the top, then **parents / government / church leaders** on rungs below. Ask: who gave those rungs their place? Read Genesis 1:1 and Psalm 95:6. Land the point: you are not the king of your own life — God is Maker and Owner. Define authority in one sentence: *the right to command and the power to act*. Ask where teens feel authority most — home, school, online rules, church — and whether they treat it as gift, annoyance, or threat.

God's order teaching

Walk through the three delegated spheres with one verse each. **Home:** Ephesians 6:1–2 — honor father and mother; Jesus obeyed Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51). **Government:** Romans 13:1–7 and Matthew 22:21 — pay what's owed, pray for leaders (1 Timothy 2:1–2). **Church:** Hebrews 13:17 — leaders watch over souls; respect is not blind worship of a person, but honor for the office God gave.

Then teach the exception clearly: Acts 5:29. When rulers told the apostles to stop preaching, they refused — because God's Word outranks human orders. Name the difference: **rebellion** rejects rightful order for pride; **civil disobedience before God** refuses sin while still respecting God's ultimate throne. Read Proverbs 6:20 and Romans 1:30. Invite students to ask: is my pushback about God's glory, or about me not wanting anyone over me?

Play the game

Split into two teams and run "Honor or Rebel?" on the screen. Twelve to fifteen minutes. Rounds move from sorting honor vs. rebellion in daily choices, to Scripture figures who respected or resisted authority, to real scenarios (curfews, sinful commands, disrespect). When it ends, bridge back: every round asked the same thing — whose order are you living under?

Quiet honesty

Hand out the reference card. Promise plainly that nobody is collecting it. Five quiet minutes to circle, check boxes, and write. Some students are deciding whether they will obey parents this week or keep performing eye-roll rebellion. That moment deserves silence and soft worship if you have it.

Worksheet

Use the teen worksheet in class or send it home. It reinforces Scripture lookups, the three spheres of authority, and one practical "this week" step. Pair students if your group benefits from talking

through answers — but keep the card moment private; the worksheet is structured practice, not confession time.

Close with prayer

Invite students to ask the Holy Spirit for a humble heart they cannot manufacture on their own (Luke 11:13). Pray for students who struggle with prideful rebellion and students who live under harsh or confusing authority. Offer yourself as a safe adult afterward. Make the standard clear: in Christ, we honor God's order — and we obey God first when men command sin.

Take it further

Use in small groups or a follow-up week:

- Where does all true authority come from? (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 95:6)
- What are the three areas where God delegated authority? (home, government, church)
- What does Ephesians 6:1–2 teach about honoring parents — and what does "honor" look like when you disagree?
- How should Christians respond to government according to Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–17?
- What does Hebrews 13:17 teach about respecting church leaders?
- When is it right to disobey human authority? (Acts 5:29)
- What dangers come with rebelling against *rightful* authority? (Deuteronomy 21:18–21; 2 Timothy 3:2)
- How does Proverbs 6:20 encourage teens to treat parental authority?
- Why is rebellion listed among serious sins in Romans 1:30 — what does it reveal about the heart?

A final word

Teach the truth without glorifying abusive power and without softening what God said about pride. Your teens will face a specific moment — the curfew argument, the class rule they hate, the leader they distrust, or the command that would make them sin. Give them Scripture, give them the game, give them the card, and trust the Spirit to make "honor unless it commands sin" sound like freedom under a good King, not slavery to random adults.