



## Submission to Lawful Authority Choose Battles to Avoid

*Living in the Image of God*  
*Module 03 Session 09*

Banking Blessings Ministry  
San Antonio, Texas  
USA



## Living in the Image of God

- God creates every person to represent him in interactions with others
- Be for others what God would be for them if he lived with us in human form
- He provides resources for people to perform the responsibilities and blesses those that do
- Program seeks to understand the meaning, resources, and human responsibilities and benefits of *Living in the Image of God*

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## What We Will Learn

- Part 3 of 3 on submission to lawful authority
- Understanding Christ interactions regarding temple tax
- He chose to pay the tax despite recognizing possible grounds for objection
- Potential objection could be better not raised even if justified
- Choose battles to avoid to conserve effort

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## Choose Battles to Avoid

- Conserve effort by ranking potential battles
- Battles to avoid—objective of overall mission can be accomplished without fighting this battle
- Battles to be fought—necessary to accomplish objective of overall mission
- Discuss Christ submission to temple-tax law

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## Choose Battles to Avoid cont'd

- Christ submitted to temple-tax law while acknowledging unfair implementation of the law
- He paid the tax to avoid potential problems that could interfere with his overall mission
- He chose to avoid the battle to focus on his overall mission
- Matthew 17:27

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## Choose Battles to Avoid cont'd

**Matthew 17:27** "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

- There could be future opportunities to address fairness of the tax collection system

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## Choose Battles to Avoid

- Bible provides several other examples
- Paul recommended Timothy be circumcised despite an existing church ruling that the circumcision was not necessary
- David reserved punishment for Shimei and Joab—proclaimed a severe sentence against them later during handover to Solomon

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## Circumcision of Timothy

- Paul wanted Timothy to join team for 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey
- Timothy had not been circumcised (of Greek father and Jewish mother)
- Did not have to be circumcised, because of a ruling by the church in Jerusalem
- Salvation does not require circumcision

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## Circumcision of Timothy cont'd

- Despite the Jerusalem ruling
- Paul circumcised Timothy
- To forestall potential challenge from Jews
- Chose to avoid potential battles regarding circumcision of Timothy
- To focus on his gospel mission instead
- Acts 16:1–3

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## Acts 16 (NIV)

1 Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.

2 The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.

3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

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## Examples from David

- David's final words to Solomon included pronouncement of severe punish for Joab and Shimei as follows
- Death for Joab, for peacetime murder of rival commanders Abner and Amasa
- Death for Shimei, for cursing David as he fled Jerusalem to Mahanaim during Absalom's rebellion
- 1 Kings 2:5–6 and 8–9

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## 1 Kings 2 (NIV)

5 "Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet.

6 Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace.

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## 1 Kings 2 (NIV)

8 “And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord: ‘I will not put you to death by the sword.’

9 But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood.”

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## David Reserved Punishment

- Both Joab and Shimei committed their offences long before Solomon became king
- David chose not to punish them at the time of their offence
- He chose to avoid potential problems that could arise from punishing them then
- To focus on his primary mission at the time
- He reserved punishment for them

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## What We Learned

- Submission to lawful authority despite grounds for objection
- Choose battles to avoid to conserve effort
- Jesus chose to pay the temple tax despite recognizing possible grounds for objection
- Paul recommended Timothy be circumcised despite an existing church ruling that the circumcision was not necessary
- David reserved punishment for Shimei and Joab—proclaimed a severe sentence against them later during handover to Solomon

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# Submission to Lawful Authority—Choose Battles to Avoid

## Living in the Image of God M03S09

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Christ teaching illustrates submission to lawful authority despite possible grounds for objection. To understand, we discuss examples from the bible to illustrate choosing battles to avoid to focus effort better. In one example, Jesus chose to pay the temple tax despite recognizing grounds for objection based on unfair implementation of the tax law. In another, Paul recommended circumcision of Timothy despite an existing church ruling that the circumcision was not necessary. In a third, David postponed punishment of two subordinates for offenses they committed during his reign but proclaimed a severe sentence against them as he passed their cases to his successor Solomon. He chose to avoid potential problems of punishing them at the time of their offense to focus instead on his overall mission.

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We conclude the bible study series on submission to lawful authority, whereby we seek understanding of Christ interactions regarding the temple tax. We recall that he chose to pay the tax despite recognizing possible grounds for objection. In the first two sessions, we discussed the basis for submission to authority ([Christ Teaches Submission to Lawful Authority](#)) and the requirement for conforming to due process in the event of an objection ([Submission to Lawful Authority—Due Process for Objections](#)). The current session focuses on understanding that an objection could be better not raised even if justified. We discuss examples from the bible to illustrate choosing battles to avoid in order to focus effort better.

The decision on whether to avoid or fight a battle could be made by categorizing potential battles based on how they might affect the overall mission. Avoid a battle if the objective of the overall mission can be accomplished without fighting the battle and the message of the mission would not be diluted by avoiding the battle. In contrast, fight a battle if the battle is necessary to accomplish the objective of the overall mission.

Christ interactions regarding the temple-tax law provide an example based on his choosing to pay the tax despite recognizing potential grounds for an objection regarding the implementation of the law [Matthew 17:27]: “But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.” He chose to pay the tax “so that we may not cause offense.” By paying the tax, he avoided potential problems that could arise with raising an objection against the tax law. There could be future opportunities to address the fairness of the tax collection.

The bible provides several other examples of choosing to avoid a battle in order to conserve effort. In one example, Paul recommended that Timothy be circumcised to join the team for the 2nd Missionary Journey, despite an existing ruling of the Jerusalem church that such circumcision was not necessary. He chose to circumcise Timothy to avoid potential controversy regarding his circumcision.

In another example, David postponed punishment of Shimei and Joab for offenses they committed during his reign. However, he later proclaimed a severe sentence against each of them during his handover to Solomon. He did not punish them at the time of their offense to avoid potential problems that could have arisen from punishing them. He chose to avoid the battles to focus effort on his overall mission.

## **Circumcision of Timothy**

Paul wanted Timothy to join the team for his 2nd Missionary Journey. He was recommended highly by the believers in Lystra but had not been circumcised, because his father was Greek (although his mother was Jewish). However, Paul knew Timothy did not have to be circumcised, based on a ruling by the church in Jerusalem regarding circumcision of Gentiles. The church in Jerusalem had ruled that Gentile believers would not be subjected to any requirement regarding circumcision, because salvation does not require circumcision.

Paul was aware of the ruling and knew that a case could be made that Timothy did not need to be circumcised. However, he circumcised Timothy to forestall potential challenge from Jews: “Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” [Acts 16:3]. He chose to avoid potential controversy regarding circumcision of Timothy, in order to focus on his gospel mission.

## **Examples from David**

In his final words to his successor Solomon, David pronounced severe punishment for Joab and Shimei. He asked for death for Joab, because he murdered rival commanders Abner and Amasa in cold blood [1 Kings 2:5–6]: “Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel’s armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace.” Similarly, he asked for death for Shimei, because Shimei cursed David as he fled Jerusalem to Mahanaim during Absalom’s rebellion.

Both Joab and Shimei committed their offences long before Solomon became king. However, David chose not to punish them at the time of their offence. He chose to avoid potential problems that could have arisen from punishing them at the time. He chose to avoid the battles to focus on his primary mission. Therefore, he reserved punishment for them.

## **Summary of What We Learned**

Christ teaching illustrates submission to lawful authority despite possible grounds for objection. To understand, we discuss examples from the bible to illustrate choosing battles to avoid to focus effort better.

In one example, Jesus chose to pay the temple tax despite recognizing grounds for objection based on unfair implementation of the tax law. In another, Paul recommended circumcision of Timothy despite an existing church ruling that the circumcision was not necessary.

In a third, David postponed punishment of two subordinates for offenses they committed during his reign but proclaimed a severe sentence against them as he passed their cases to his successor Solomon. He chose to avoid potential problems of punishing them at the time of their offense to focus instead on his overall mission.