
WANTING EARS TO HEAR

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

“When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, ‘What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; to your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!’ So Israel departed to their tents.” ~1 Kings 12:16

In so many ways, learning to function well in the kingdom of God resembles learning about a new subject; like chemistry or a foreign language. Not only are we constantly introduced to new concepts and principles, but we find ourselves facing new vocabulary words.

For instance, one of the most dynamic and helpful understandings for spiritual fruitfulness is the notion of submission. As we choose to appropriately submit to the people and situations God has arranged for us—and as we appropriately refuse to submit to those circumstances or people trying to take us away from God’s plan—we will find ourselves growing more mature and spiritually productive.

The essence of obedience is listening very carefully and responding appropriately to someone whom the Lord wants us to listen to; and submitting, fitting in position in relation to someone else. When we submit, we choose to do something that we might not normally think or want to do if we only listened to ourselves and were not trying to fit in with another person. Thus, when children submit to their parent or their teacher, they end up doing things (cleaning their room, doing their homework) and that would not otherwise be high on their self-made priority list.

That’s why we do not want to submit to false teachers or controlling leaders—we would end up doing and believing what isn’t good for us in the Lord.

But not all submission equates to the person “*under*” obeying the person in authority. This verse gives us an example of a king who unwisely chose not to obey (*listen and respond carefully to*) the very legitimate requests and desires of those whom he ruled over. When the people saw that the person in authority did not listen to them, they rejected his authority.

It wasn't just that the king gave them an answer they did not want to hear; rather, it was clear that the leader never even heard the people. His decision was selfish and self-serving.

God wants us to feel "*heard*" and "*responded to*" by those over us, as well as being careful to "*hear*" and "*respond to*" the counsel from those we are leading.