



GEEKS UNDER GRACE

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SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING (2017) | AUTHORITY | BIBLE STUDY

Facilitator Note: We encourage facilitators to take this Bible study and expound on it throughout the week, allowing it to be a springboard for deeper conversation and personal meditation.

PRESS START

In *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, Peter discovers that he can shoot over 500 different types of webs—some of which could be helpful in day-to-day life. **If you could create your own special type of webbing for an everyday task, what would you create and why?**

(Facilitator note: If possible, have the people in your group act out what that usage would look like.)

EQUIP

This newest incarnation of Spider-Man pays homage to his comic book canon. His suit honors his comic book origins, yet still looks fresh in the wake of its other live-action variants. Peter's sense of humor, even while fighting criminals, feels like it's come straight from the pages of the comics. Not to mention, this incarnation of Spider-Man is a young teenager, instead of an adult or older teen. Along with Peter Parker's adolescence comes a dilemma that every teenager faces: questioning adult authority.

Throughout the movie, we hear Peter Parker questioning why Tony Stark, his father figure, is putting so much restriction on him. Peter longs to prove himself; he even tells his best friend, Ned, that he is essentially too good for school, an arrogant quip that lands Peter in every teenager's worst nightmare: detention. But detention is the least of the issues caused by Peter's pride.

Peter Parker finds himself at odds with Stark, who attempts to make Peter understand the reason for his strictness. Stark explains that if someone dies during Peter's rescue missions, then the responsibility and repercussions will fall

on Peter, but if something happens to Peter himself, then Stark would be saddled with a burden he does not wish to carry.

Peter's rebuttal ("I was just trying to be like you.") is quickly shut down by Stark's quick, yet stern response: "I need you to be better." Stark's words embody the heartbeat behind true leadership. True leaders don't wish to simply replicate themselves; they want those coming up behind them to be even better individuals.

LEVEL UP

Peter Parker suffers from the need to be right and in control. At some point in our lives, we have all questioned why those in authority have made decisions and mandates that we simply don't understand. What we often forget is that our viewpoints limit us. Those in authority can see the broader effects their decisions have—even into the distant future. Do those in authority want us to succeed? If they are biblical authorities, yes! They want us to be more than ourselves; they want us to be what God has called us to be. Still, being in authority means great burdens are upon our leaders. If we can take something from the mythos of our friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, "With great power comes great responsibility!" Or, to word it more Scripturally:

Luke 12:48 (ESV) *"...Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."*

Jesus uses the example of a master dealing with his servant. Those who are given greater responsibility are also expected to do more and be aware of more. But what does Scripture then say about how we should respond to and view our leaders?

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV) *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Please note that this Scripture isn't promoting unfair and inappropriate servitude. What it does advocate is obedience and submission. We should do what our leaders tell us to do, as that's what it means to obey. Yet, notice that second part: "*submit to them.*" Submission isn't just about following orders; it is a matter of trust. Submission is about us trusting those whom God places over us.

The writer of Hebrews doesn't just stop with the command to obey and submit; rather, like a good leader, he provides those who follow him with further reasoning. Like Stark feeling the burden of Peter's well-being, the writer of Hebrews tells us that our leaders regularly feel the burden of our lives. They are the ones who give account for what is taught to us and what happens to us while we are under their care.

Some may use their "submission" to leadership as an excuse for their poor behavior. They may find themselves constantly saying, "Oh well, they are the one in charge, so they are to blame," instead of taking personal responsibility for their actions. Others may be offended by the thought of submitting to another person's authority (especially when they think they know better) and declare their own independence in rebellion, much like Peter does when he convinces his friend, Ned, to take off the "Training Wheels Protocol" within the suit's programming.

Biblically, we are exhorted to honor our leaders without complaining. The writer in Hebrews even plainly says that complaining "*would be of no advantage to you.*" Remember, those in authority will have to give an account for their actions, so serve joyfully and with honor, understanding that you do not carry the same burden that they do.

MOD

One aspect of leadership is that you are responsible, not just for one aspect or life, but for many.

Ask: Have you ever been in a situation where you made a decision that didn't just affect one person, but an entire group? What kind of factors did you have to take into consideration before you made your choice?

Ask: How you ever had someone complain about the choice(s) you made as their leader? How did you handle that situation?

Ask: Reflecting on the Scriptures we read and the personal stories we've shared, how do you see yourself adjusting your perspective of leadership?

PRAY

Today we are going to pray specifically for those in leadership over us. We will pray for our bosses, our parents, our pastors, our teachers, our local councilmen/women, and our president. As we pray, let us truly be honoring, regardless of our personal feelings.

(Facilitator note: Assign each person to pray for specific leaders, plus their boss/parents. Encourage them to call these leaders out by name as they pray. If someone's prayer begins to get a little sidewise, because they are trying to be funny or snarky, as a leader, simply interrupt them with your own prayer of blessing.)

THE NEXT LEVEL

Romans 13:1-5 (NLT) ¹ Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. ² So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. ³ For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. ⁴ The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. ⁵ So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.

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