

OHIO BRIGADE CAMP

BIBLE X | LEADER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

DAY 4 — Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance

Jonathan Mayhew | 1750

Scripture Focus	Romans 13:1–7 Acts 5:27–32 2 Samuel 23:1–4
Sermon	Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance — Jonathan Mayhew (1750)
Theme	God's Authority Stands Over All Human Authority
Session Length	45–60 min (adjust questions as needed)
Audience	Young men, Ohio Brigade Camp

SERMON BACKGROUND — KNOW THIS BEFORE YOU LEAD

Jonathan Mayhew preached this sermon in Boston in 1750 — 26 years before the Declaration of Independence. It was one of the most politically explosive sermons in American history. John Adams later credited it as one of the foundational documents of the Revolution.

Mayhew's argument was theological, not merely political. He was working through Romans 13 — the passage that commands obedience to governing authorities — and asking a question the Church had long avoided: Does obedience to rulers have limits?

His answer: yes. Rulers are ordained by God for the good of the people. When they cease to serve that purpose — when they become tyrants and oppressors — they have forfeited the authority that God entrusted to them. Resistance is not rebellion. In such cases, resistance is righteous. It is what fidelity to God actually requires.

This was not a license for revolution whenever you dislike the government. Mayhew was precise: the bar for righteous resistance is high, the process must be exhausted, and the cause must be just. But the principle is real — God's authority stands over all human authority. Caesar is not ultimate.

THE THREE BIG IDEAS — MAYHEW'S FRAMEWORK

1. All Authority Comes from God — and Exists for His Purposes

Romans 13 does not say rulers are infallible. It says authority as an institution is ordained by God. The purpose of that authority is the good of society — to protect the innocent and punish evil. A ruler who does the opposite has stepped outside the mandate God gave him.

- Key text: Romans 13:1–7 — Every authority is established by God.

- Key text: 1 Peter 2:13–17 — Submit for the Lord's sake.
- Key text: 2 Samuel 23:1–4 — The just ruler fears God.

2. Obedience to God Supersedes Obedience to Men

The Bible is full of men and women who defied human authority in obedience to God: Peter before the Sanhedrin, Shadrach and company before Nebuchadnezzar, Dietrich Bonhoeffer before Hitler. Their disobedience was not rebellion — it was faithfulness. The line is not drawn at personal discomfort but at direct contradiction of God's commands.

- Key text: Acts 5:27–32 — We must obey God rather than men.
- Historical example: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — Daniel 3.
- Historical example: Dietrich Bonhoeffer — obedience to God over the Nazi state.

3. Liberty Comes from God, Not from Government

The American founders understood what Mayhew taught: rights do not come from kings, parliaments, or constitutions. They come from God. Government's role is to protect those rights, not grant them. When government becomes the source of rights, it can also become the source of their removal.

- Founding principle: The Declaration of Independence — rights are endowed by the Creator.
- Key application: If your rights come from God, no man can ultimately take them.
- Key application: If your rights come from government, government can redefine them.

LEADER COACHING NOTES

Set the Stakes — This Is Not a Political Opinion

Some boys will see this as permission to disrespect authority whenever they disagree with it. Correct that clearly: Mayhew's standard is very high. The question is not "do I like this rule?" but "does this authority contradict God's command?" Disagreement alone is not grounds for defiance.

The Bonhoeffer Example Is Powerful — Use It

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who was hanged by the Nazis in 1945 for participating in a plot to assassinate Hitler. He did not take that decision lightly — he wrestled with it theologically for years. He is one of the clearest modern examples of righteous resistance at personal cost. Bring him to life for them.

Rebellion vs. Righteous Resistance — Draw It Clearly

Rebellion: defiance rooted in pride, self-interest, or inconvenience. Righteous resistance: defiance rooted in obedience to God, pursued through proper means, at personal cost. The Founders exhausted every option before independence. Mayhew's principle was not license — it was a serious theological argument earned by long patience.

Tie It to Their Lives

They are young men under authority — parents, coaches, leaders, laws. When is it right to push back? When is it right to obey something you disagree with? Help them build a framework for this that will serve them the rest of their lives. It is not about revolution — it is about knowing what you stand for and why.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

Romans 13:1–7 / 2 Samuel 23:1–4

God establishes authority. But what is authority for? What makes a leader legitimate in God's eyes?

Leader note: Push them to articulate the purpose of authority, not just its existence. Authority that serves its God-given purpose deserves obedience. Authority that doesn't is a different question.

Acts 5:27–32

Peter says 'We must obey God rather than men.' Is that always a license to disobey? What makes Peter's disobedience different from just doing what you want?

Leader note: The key distinction is the object: Peter was obeying God, not his own preferences. Challenge them to name the difference.

Historical examples: Shadrach / Bonhoeffer

Both Shadrach and Bonhoeffer defied governing authority. Both had good reasons. What made their disobedience righteous rather than rebellious?

Leader note: Cost and conscience are the distinguishing marks. Both acted at great personal risk, and both acted because the command of God was in direct conflict with the command of men.

The Declaration of Independence

The Founders said our rights are 'endowed by our Creator.' Why does it matter where our rights come from? What changes if the government is the source of rights instead of God?

Leader note: This is the hinge of American civics. If God grants rights, they cannot be permanently removed. If government grants rights, government can take them back. Help them grasp why the Founders insisted on this distinction.

Closing question

Is there a difference between rebellion and righteous resistance in your own life right now — with your parents, coaches, or other authorities? Which one are you practicing?

Leader note: Keep this honest and specific. The goal is not to encourage defiance but to build a conscience that can tell the difference between serving God and serving self.

CLOSING CHALLENGE — SEND THEM WITH SOMETHING

"The Founders did not fire first. They did not rush to revolution. They petitioned, they appealed, they reasoned — and when all of that failed, they acted at enormous personal cost, with a clear conscience before God. That is the standard Mayhew set. Know what you believe. Know why you believe it. And when the moment comes, be willing to stand — but be sure you are standing for God and not just for yourself."

Assign them one honest task before tomorrow:

- Learn one of your constitutional rights today. Know it well enough to explain it to someone else by tomorrow morning.

LEADER NOTES

Notes from this session:

Follow-up needed with:
