

Authority and Submission

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I. Introduction

The topic of authority arises on disagreements on leadership. This has to do with decisions and styles (authoritarian, consensus, lassie faire). There is a general rebellion and abuse of authority in the last days. Structures are too often adopted from the outside world and it is sometimes assumed that we can only meet people on our own terms. There are questions on how to structure an international entity. Guidelines are needed from the Bible about authority and submission.

II. Background.

A. To have the right without the power is to be ineffective, but to have the power without the right is illegal. The two go together.

B. Preoccupation with authority can be dangerous. (Luke 10)

C. There are two kinds of groups.

1. The erratic group - these are gathered together to accomplish a goal outside of itself.
2. The centric group - an association of people in which the general level of personal concern is greater than the general level of group concern. It has an unhealthy pre-occupation with self.

III. Authority is the right to decide or take action, to direct or restrain.

A. All authority comes from God. (Romans 13:1)

1. All other authorities are established by God. (John 5:30)

2. Authority is designated to Christ, Satan and angels. (Matthew 28:18, 1 Peter 3:22, Revelation 13:2, John 12:31, 14:30)

3. God has designated certain authority to mankind.

IV. The authorities of men.

A. God has authority over man.

B. Man is subject to nature. (Genesis 1:26)

C. Husbands have authority over their wives. (Genesis 3:16)

D. Parents are an authority. (Ephesians 6:1)

E. Government is an authority. (1 Peter 2:13-14)

F. Employers are authorities. (Ephesians 6:5-9, 1 Peter 2:18)

G. There are spiritual leaders. (1 Peter 5:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Corinthians 16:15-16)

IV. Observations on authority.

A. We live in an ordered universe where there is authority and submission to authority.

B. The source of all authority is God who has designated authority in the spirit world and in the world of men. (1 Peter 3:22, Ephesians 6:12)

C. Humans are in both roles of having authority and needing to submit.

D. Scriptural principles concerning authority apply whether the relationship is voluntary or involuntary.

E. All people have more than one authority in which they are to relate. (Luke 20)

V. Conclusion.

A. The individual must decide finally which authority applies in any given situation. (Job 24:15, Proverbs 1:29, Isaiah 7:15, Hebrews 5:14)

B. All authorities are limited and when any authority seeks to go beyond its limits the trouble starts.

C. The decisions that count are made by the people at the bottom of the structure not the top.

D. The Bible has guidelines for every relationship and they are not all that complicated.

E. There is a diversity of authorities that one is to respond to, and the individual must choose sometimes which authority to be accountable to. Intelligence is the ability to discern relationships. (Romans 14:12)

Application questions.

1. How is authority a simple fact of reality? Explain.

2. What are some situations when authorities might seem to conflict with each other? How is one to respond to these situations?

3. What authorities do you have the most difficult time submitting to? What is the biblical response? What can you do differently in light of this message?
