

Authority - Definition and Source

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I. Introduction.

I have been excited about being with you this week to teach on authority and submission. We will also talk spiritual leadership. We will also talk about decision making. We all feel isolation and fatigued when working in a foreign field. Once I answered a question thoroughly only to discover the next day that I had answered the wrong question. Clear communication is difficult in one's own culture and is compounded in a foreign culture. I have shared the results of this stuff on authority with a businessman who agreed with the content but said he revolted against it in his soul. We began this study because of disagreements in the Navigators due to decisions being handed down from leadership.

A. There is quiet a difference in philosophy of leadership in various sections of many Christian organizations.

1. Authoritarian style of leadership demands submission.
2. Autocratic leadership is leading by one staff.
3. My own style of leadership is difficult to define.
4. Consensus is another style but is too slow and too late.

B. There is also general rebellion and abuse of leadership.

C. Some Navigators have an attitude toward leadership that will strangle our efforts to impact the cultures we work in.

1. Many laymen will not work with us because we are insensitive to them.
2. Considering some of their complaints it's difficult to criticize them.

D. What can we learn about authority and submission in working in a movement?

E. How do we structure our work globally?

F. Structure and composition in a global ministry is very challenging.

1. Working with multinational staff is difficult.
2. I laid out the problems before some Korean leaders.
 - a. He said we need a clear sense of purpose.
 - b. We need a clear line of authority.
3. We have clarified our purpose.

II. This study on authority is in the making so I am working through it, and I am sharing my heart in order to help.

A. Another preliminary danger is that an unhealthy preoccupation with authority is not good.

1. Jesus sent his disciples out to preach and they returned excited. (Luke 10:17-20)
2. They rejoiced that even demons were subject to them.
3. Jesus responded that he saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning.
4. Jesus had given them authority but they were cautioned not to rejoice in this, but that their names were written in heaven.
 - a. We need to rejoice in the right thing.
 - b. Some day it's all going to be over and our work will end.
 - c. All that remains is that we are citizens of heaven.
 - d. Debating over who has the right to decide about ministry is an unhealthy preoccupation on authority.
 - e. We may have an unhealthy preoccupation on regional leaders, etc.
 - f. I have difficulty trusting one man in leadership.
 - g. When he leaves a power struggle happens.

5. Doug Sparks helped me to get started on the subject of authority.

B. Authority is the right to decide or to take action, to direct or restrain, to say go or to say stop.

1. The key is who has the right.
2. One day a man told me authority is not the issue but comes to the fore when it restricts someone from doing what they want.

C. Sources of authority have roots in various ideas.

1. Private property.
2. Collective will of the people.
3. A constitution.
4. Board of directors.
5. The nature of man.
6. But the real source of authority comes from God. (Romans 13:1)

- a. We are all subject to the governing authorities because they are instituted by God.
- b. Jesus said He can do nothing on his own authority. (John 5:30)
- c. Herod claimed to have authority over Jesus but Jesus attributed his authority to God. (John 19:11)
- d. Jesus attributed all authority to God. (Matthew 28:18)
- e. Jesus sits at the right hand of God. (1 Peter 3:22)
- f. God even delegates authority to Satan (Revelation 13:2; John 12:31; 14:30)
- g. God also delegated authority to mankind.

7. With man there are seven authority/submission relationships in the Bible.

- a. God and man. (Matthew 6:10.
- b. Man and nature. (Genesis 1:26)
- c. Husband and wife. (Genesis 3:16)
- d. Parents and children. (Ephesians 6:1)
- e. Governors and governed. (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14)
- f. Employers and employees. (Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Peter 2:18)
- g. Spiritual leaders and followers (1 Peter 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:15-16)

D. I want to make five observations based on what I have said so far.

- 1. We live in an ordered universe where authority and submission is reality.
 - a. This is a fact of life.
 - b. We must live with it.
- 2. The source of all authority is God who had delegated authority in spiritual world and in the natural world. (1 Peter 3:22; Ephesians 6:12)
 - a. God does not coerce.
 - b. He has given man a measure of free will.
- 3. All humans are required to lead but to also submit.
 - a. Husbands rule but they also submit.

b. All people rule but also submit.

4. Scriptural guidelines for authority and submission apply whether the relationship is voluntary or involuntary.

a. Arranged marriages do not change the rules of husbands loving his wives and wives submitting to husbands.

b. Children do not choose their parent yet they are required to submit.

c. No one chooses the country of birth yet they must submit.

d. Slaves still exist in the world and they must submit to the masters.

5. All persons have more than one submission relationship in their lives.

a. Parents.

b. Government.

c. Spiritual leaders.

d. Pharisees asked Jesus by what authority he performed his miracles so they could trap him and deliver him to the authority of the governor. (Luke 20:1-20)

e. The final word regarding which relationship applies to him must be made by the individual.

1. If I tell you to exceed the speed limits in order to hurry you have to decide which authority to obey.

2. All authority is limited. When authority exceeds its limits there is trouble.

3. In Navigators those decisions for or against Christ will determine how we minister in an area.

11. Leadership making decisions in the office may have no bearing on how things really are in the field.

III. Tomorrow we will talk about more issues.

A. The problem of authority.

B. The submission to authority.

C. The exercise of authority.

D. Spiritual leadership.

E. Decision making as it relates to the Book of Acts.