

Lesson 7

AUTHORITY, SERVANTHOOD AND SUCCESS

I. Authority

- A. **Definition:** A person or body of persons in whom such power is vested. It is the power to command, enforce laws, and enact obedience or judge. Authority equals power.
- B. **Reasons for Authority**
 - 1. **Competence.** People are given authority because they are proved competent. It is essential for those who are spiritual leaders to be under the authority of God through His Word.
 - 2. **Position.** Authority comes with a position or office. God has ordained leadership in the church to rule and lead His people. God's people are to obey and submit to ordained leaders (Heb. 13:7). With position comes power, but power must not be abused. All leaders are under God's ultimate authority and to Him they will give an account for how well they lead. Christian leaders must lead according to biblical commands and principles. NOTE: Many cult leaders have established themselves, demanding obedience from their followers, who have been rejected by the Church and who use the Word for their own diabolical purposes.
 - 3. **Personality.** Authority comes when leaders have a charismatic personality whereby people are won over, not by a man's principles or beliefs but his delightful personality.
 - 4. **Character.** Authority comes when a leader proves he can be trusted and people give him that trust.
- C. **Kinds of Authority**
 - 1. **Physical.** Sometimes use of physical force is necessary. Even Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple (John 2:13-16).
 - 2. **Social.** There are standards of conduct for society (right and wrong based on the moral law).
 - 3. **Spiritual.** For Christians, there are the commands and principles for living that are set down in the Word of God.
- D. **Abuse of Authority**
 - 1. Power is often abused. It is used to manipulate people for one's own goals, agenda and ends.
 - 2. Power abuse always reaches the goal at any cost, and that hurts people the most.
 - 3. Power abuse infringes on the freedom and rights of others. The leader learns to enlist by motivation and not force by power.
 - 4. Power is given by God to serve others and not self.
 - 5. The Bible tells leaders not to lord it over God's people, but to love and serve them (1 Pet. 5:13; Mark 10:32).
 - 6. Christian leaders must lead by example, using Christ as the supreme model of leadership (Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:5-8).
 - 7. Christian leaders "come along side" (1 Tim. 4:11); "encourage" (1 Tim. 5:1); "carefully instruct" (1 Tim. 4:6); "gently instruct those who oppose" God's people (2 Tim. 2:24-25).
 - 8. Spiritual authority flows from spiritual maturity—it is a by-product of maturity and never a goal. Maturity comes with time, experience and consistent faith/obedience.

II. Servanthood

- A. Definition: A servant is one who is unreservedly committed to authority and does what his master requires of him.
- B. Supreme Model. Jesus Christ is the ultimate servant (Matt. 23:10-11). He sacrificed everything (Phil. 2:5-8) and laid down His life for others (1 John 3:16). He was willing to serve to such an extent that he washed the “stinking” feet of the disciples (John 13:5-17). Jesus never asked His disciples to do anything that He Himself was not will to do.
- C. Preparing To Be A Servant Leader
 - 1. Get to know your God. Search for Him (Jer. 28:13); pant for Him (Psa. 42:1); thirst for Him (Psa. 63:1) and delight in Him (Psa. 37:4).
 - 2. Be totally committed to the Lord Jesus. You are a bond-servant (slave). You have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 - 3. Be a person of God’s Word. Search for its truth and wisdom as a hidden treasure. Evaluate everything according to the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - 4. Always yield to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and be ready to follow His leading (Psa. 132:2).
 - 5. Be sure of your divine call to ministry. Remember, God has picked you out for the special purpose of leading God’s people. Embrace God’s call with enthusiasm and joy. Leadership is a calling, not a profession.
- D. Consequences Of A Servant
 - 1. To lead is to suffer. Christ was the suffering servant. Every leader will suffer (2 Tim. 3:12).
 - 2. Every leader will have to do menial tasks form time to time.
 - 3. Every leader must learn to put others first and self way down the line.
 - 4. Since Jesus came to serve, then His followers must learn to serve and His leader must learn humility and servant/leadership.
- E. Servant Leadership For The African Church (Tom Austin)
 - 1. Traditional African Leadership: Kings and chiefs were regarded with religious awe. They were societies link to the ancestors and the gods. Often regarded as semi-divine or divine and having certain magical powers enabling him to provide health and prosperity for his people. He represented the people and administered tribal law. He would have access to the deity to provide for the people, and the power to make decisions and to judge.
 - 2. Strengths of the African Church: The pastor and elders would be viewed by the people as the God-ordained leaders. Members would expect them to lead and make decisions for them. The congregation would see themselves as united under this leadership and would be willing to submit to it.
 - 3. Weaknesses of the African Church: Leaders may tend to take too much power and members may gladly give it, thus too much dependence upon leadership for personal relationship with Christ, walk, and holiness. Also this kind of power available tends to corrupt leaders. Modeling is difficult since people expect leaders to be spiritual because they are closer to God. True servant leadership may be seen as weakness by more traditional Africans.
 - 4. Changes Needed for Servant Leadership: An emphasis on developing everyone toward discipleship and spiritual gifts. Thrusting people into ministry. Teaching on the differences between traditional views and biblical views of leadership. Leaders to become more aware of the dangers inherent in church leadership positions. Develop systems of accountability in areas of finances, use of time, ethics, spiritual disciplines and thought life.

III. **Success**

- A. Definition: Success is a favorable or prosperous result of one’s attempts or endeavors.
- B. Worldly Success. Worldly success is usually defined as winning at any cost in spite of resources and circumstances. It is usually defined by money, respect, reputation, intelligence, position, education, land, etc.

- C. Christian Success. Success for a Christian is to know God's Word and do it. The ultimate success for a Christian is to become like Christ (Phil. 3:10-11). This is a process and is never completed until death or the coming of Christ. A Christian has never arrived and is always in process. This is accomplished by a life of faith (Col. 2:6) and the claiming of precious promises (2 Pet. 1:2-11). For a Christian any and all accomplishments are by the grace of God and are for His glory.
- D. Can a Christian Be Successful In the World?
1. He most certainly can and this is seen in Biblical characters like Abraham, Joshua and Lydia. Also in history, like Wilberforce and Billy Graham. But these people knew where their success came from and it humbled them instead of making them proud.
 2. For a Christian to reach success in the world he/she must go by God's standards and moral laws, which define the terms of success and controls the results. Success gained in the flesh may impress men but it will burn up in eternity. God has plans to prosper Christians (Jer. 29:11) and has already given us an abundant life (John 10:10). He has promised us spiritual success when we do things God's way. Christians may not get physically rich but they will get spiritual riches and be fulfilled in whatever God has called them to do.
- E. Achieving Success
1. One must know what God wants them to do and go after that goal with faith and enthusiasm. God never blesses anything which is contrary to the moral law of God.
 2. One must know how to set short and long range goals so as to stretch one to be all that God wants him/her to be.
 3. One must be committed not only to a life of faith but a life of obedience—it is work and perseverance that ultimately brings one to his goals.
 4. The Christian leader must work for God's glory alone, giving God the glory for all successes.
 5. The Christian must be committed to the biblical principle that all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28). He must also believe he/she is a person of destiny and is going to win (2 Cor. 4:7-11).
 6. Doing the little things well prepares us to do the big things better (Luke 16:10).
 7. When you know God's will, apply all your resources to the task, setting aside all hindrances (Heb. 12:1-2).
 8. When God brings success, you must remember that you are only a servant. When you have done everything you were told to do by God, you should remember you are only an unworthy servant who only did his duty (Luke 17:10).
- F. Obstacles To Success
1. Eyes On Circumstances. A leader gets his eyes off the sovereign God and puts them on the present circumstances. He loses perspective on God. Yet, only God can handle uncontrollable circumstances (Phil. 4:6-7).
 2. Lack of Motivation. One looks only inside himself for motivation or waits for others to motivate him instead of looking to God and the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
 3. Addiction to Mediocrity. A person accepts the status quo and is satisfied with something less than the best. Unfortunately many Christians settle for less than the best and do it in the name of God.
 4. Fear of Failure. Leaders often fear failure so much, which would be a negative mark on their character and reputation, they do nothing. No decision is a decision!
 5. Fear of Success. Some people, even leaders, do not want success because it means added responsibilities and problems. They feel inadequate to cope. Every leader feels inadequate but he/she must remember that one's adequacy is in Christ (Phil. 4:13).
 6. Fear of God. Sometimes leaders do not act because they fear God will not bless their action. God will bless a leader's action if his motivation is right and he wants to do the act biblically. God, however, does give warnings to leaders (Ezk. 34:1-10; Jer. 23:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).