

11 Authority - "King's palace" - Learning To Take Charge

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The great need of our time is for leadership. Leadership is not inherited from the past power and influence of a privileged few. A man or woman can carry nothing but a dream, determination and the call of God and still take their place among those that changed history. Daniel and his friends had nothing when they were taken to Babylon. Like the rest of their nation, they were stripped of all home, family and personal possessions. They were powerless and penniless, yet they learned to lead so well that they survived three different governments and remained in each in the same position of responsibility and rulership! Not all are leaders. But if God has His hand on you, you will become a leader in something. What can you learn about leadership?

IN GOVERNMENT, GOD IS THE ULTIMATE RULER

"And the Lord gave ... Judah into (Nebuchadnezzars') hand" (Dan. 1:2)

All authority in life is ultimately derived from God. When God called Abram and promised to bless, protect him and make him great it was for the sake of others. His covenant blessing, protection and power was to bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth. (Gen. 12:1-3). Whatever God does in your life to lift you up in the sight of others and to give you authority in their lives is so that you may serve them and bless them. God gets you right with Him, then blesses you to be a blessing.

What is the purpose of power? To IMPLEMENT GOD'S PURPOSES in every sphere of society. Power in the Bible is always given for Divine purpose. You are called to know the Lord, His law and conform all of your life to what He shows you. In your walk with God you will see and sometimes meet many leaders in church and nation. Not all of these will be good leaders. If God is ultimately in charge, how does He let some people get into such terrible governmental situations? Paul said:

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." (Rom 13:1-2:)

Paul does not say here that all leaders are good or right. He says the KIND of authority is established by God. God gives a nation the kind of government it deserves. What kind of power is "best" ? If the "powers" or forms of authority are those purposed by God for a nation at a particular time in its history, what does He look for when He changes such a government? What makes these changes possible?

FORMS OF AUTHORITY

God alters the power of government to fit the spirituality of its people. The form of government best for a nation, a church or a family is based on its overall spiritual maturity and willingness to conform to reality. He "puts down and sets up" (Ps. 75:6-7). The measure of real love (obedience to God and His laws) and wisdom (awareness and faithfulness to His truth) in a nation, church or individual life sets the limits of the

government in our lives. This control structure need not stay the same forever. It is dynamic and affected by prayer (dependence) and faithfulness (loving obedience).

It is true nationally, religiously and personally. God gives us the leaders we deserve. If we are stupid and selfish we deserve dictatorial leadership - those who will not ask, but just tell us what to do. If we in turning to God become less ignorant and selfish, our leadership will eventually move to a lesser level of control. The way to change leadership away from strong legal control is to become yourself more wise and loving.

This basic pattern of authority change is seen in the family:

As a **BABY** our parents never ask us what we should do. They have absolute power. They feed you, change you, run your whole life. You don't get to say or do anything about it because you are too dumb and too self-centered to make almost any kind of decision. This is God's protection authority structure. (Rom. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:1)

As a **CHILD** things change a bit as you get older. You parents are hopefully not the kind of dictators they had to be when you were tiny. They become a bit more like a King and Queen. They are in charge of a lot of your life, but not all of it. You get to make requests. They are not always granted, but you do have a bit more freedom when you show you understand. (1 Cor. 13:11)

Then you get to be really cool. You are officially a **YOUTH**. You are much more grown-up now. You don't want to be treated like a child and have to show your parents you are wise enough and trustworthy enough to be given greater freedom. As a young man or woman you are able to provide for yourself, but not for someone else. You get much more freedom with that responsibility. (1 John 2:14b)

Finally you graduate from home altogether. By this time you ought to have learned enough and loved enough to start a marriage and a home yourself. When you become a **FATHER** or mother yourself, you take responsibility not only for yourself but for your family. Your parents no longer are in charge of your home. They become in God's ideal, good friends and advisors. We see similar patterns in the type of authority structures in civic and church government:

POLITICS CHURCH FAMILY

Dictatorship (Roman Catholic) Baby (John 3:3-5;) Monarchy (Episcopalian) Child (I John 2:12) Oligarchy (Presbyterian) Young (I John 2:13-14) Democracy (Congregational) Father (I John 2:13-14) As self-discipline, self-control and self-government under God decreases, exterior government increases. Edmund Burke said long ago: "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power is put somewhere on will and appetite. The less there is within the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters."

PRAYING FOR LEADERS

Because God gives us the kind of leadership we deserve, we should pray for those in authority. You are not free to ridicule a God-appointed leader even if they are wrong. Continued wrong brings its own Divine judgment. If someone keeps doing stupid or wrong things, you will see God deal with them in His own way. Your job is to stay out of the way of that dealing. Trust God, not the leadership.

If you have a good leader, pray that God will encourage and grace them. It is lonely at the top. Leadership with its privileges and responsibilities also carries many dangers. Pray for and encourage them. George Verwer of Operation Mobilization counsels:

"It is in your power to make or break your leader. To ruin his leadership, just do the following..."

- (a) Don't do what he asks you unless you FEEL like doing it.
- (b) Don't do what he asks unless you understand and agree with it completely.
- (c) Forget to do the tasks assigned to you to do.
- (d) Do what he asks, but grumble and complain about it to yourself and others.
- (e) Make him explain detail why he wants it done before you do it.
- (f) Take everything he says as a personal offense; bear grudges in your heart.
- (g) Never bother to clear the air in a misunderstanding with him.
- (h) Point out to others in the group the mistakes and failures of the leader.
- (i) Present to others "prayer requests" on what you feel is wrong with him.
- (j) Constantly express doubt his decisions are wise; always expect the worst.
- (k) Point out constantly that you are right and that you have more experience and a superior spiritual life than your leader.
- (l) Be sure to say, "I told you so," when he makes mistake.
- (m) Never take into consideration cultural or other differences that may lead your leader to think and act differently from you
- (n) Assert your authority over the leader, especially when he isn't around.
- (o) Constantly correct him and give him advice, especially among others.
- (p) Don't take time to pray with him, and miss as many devotional times as possible so that you can never seek the face of the Lord together.
- (q) Be especially sharp to catch all his driving faults and make sure that all of the group knows about them.
- (r) Keep him up late at night talking about his mistakes and how you feel he should lead the team, coupled with discussion on minor devotional differences.

"If you practice one of these points, I can almost guarantee that you will succeed in destroying both the unity of the team and the effectiveness of the leader. All of us, therefore, should take as our motto Matthew 7:12: "Let us have fervent love among ourselves, for love covers a multitude of sins. "Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

" Let us realize that there will be problems, disagreements, and differences of opinion. By triumphing in the life of love and faith, all these things will but strengthen the team. (Hebrews 12:1,2)

THE PATTERN OF A LEADER

(A) **THE LEADER:** Who you are and your call in Christ is key to all leadership.

E. M. Bounds said it: "The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men." What you are on a day-by-day basis forms the platform for what you say. (1) Be **TOGETHER**. Dress well, look good, and feel good. Let God own your body so it is strong and serviceable. Groom so that you have the maximum influence with the crowd you want to reach. Obey God's health laws to keep you feeling fit and alert. (2) Be **OUTGOING**. Christians must be marked by a noticeable absence of hang-ups. Be positive, outgoing, and cheerful. That ought to come naturally from a clean heart and life, and a real concern for others in God's love. Don't be afraid to speak up for what you know is right, or to take a stand on issues of moral or spiritual value. (3) Be **CONSISTENT**. Your Daniel Files will help you here. We designed them to give you overall excellence in your life. Christians ought to be the most natural, stable and trustworthy people around. Always

strive for the SAME OFFICE in every organization you are in. If you want to be president, always run for president; if you want to be secretary, always aim at being secretary.

(B) The OBJECTIVE: Know what you want to do and why. It is important to have as good a knowledge of your goal as you possibly can. Make it a point to be highly informed. Anticipate objections and problems; draft out rough solution for them before you run into them. Decide what position you feel God want you to have. Fix it clearly in your heart. Then set your goal and work towards it with courage and faith.

(C) BEGIN YOUR CAMPAIGN: Never put off for tomorrow what you can do today. Don't wait until you are older to run for a position of influence. Begin now! Make as many friends as possible without compromising issues of truth or value. Develop LOYALTIES; be the kind of person one can really trust.

Take RESPONSIBILITIES as they come up be thoroughly dependable in doing them. Get involved in important school functions where you will not have to compromise your testimony. Make it a point to be TOTALLY INVOLVED where the action is. Always begin at the lowest seat; (Luke 14:10) if the competition is keen, run for a lesser office first and excel in it.

LEGAL LIMITS

Every nation has some kind of state religion. A country without one is just a country in transit from one form of religious belief to another. That "religion" may be secular humanism, atheism, some form of occult or even some kind of Christian consensus. This "national religion" may not be a mandate or a command. It may not be enforced by rules. It may only be a common pressure on all to conform. The idea of a nation without a belief system is as big a myth as that of "objective journalism."

Only revival or national spiritual awakening and reformation can affect the laws and morals that guide a nation to the true God. As nations come under the dealings and judgments of God, true saints in them are often isolated, rejected and persecuted.

When the truth of Jesus threatens a national religion, those who stand for Him can be a target for bigotry, fear and hate. Whenever possible you must use the existing laws of the land to guide your witness. You may have SPECIFIC RIGHTS under the law that those that oppose your stand either do not know or ignore. Don't be afraid to use good laws to support your stand for Christ. (Acts 16:16-40; 19:24-41; Rom. 13:3-8) The Students Bill Of Rights On Campus (See Appendix) is one such set of guidelines from US Constitutional Law. But remember; such rights are fragile. They depend only on the level of true Biblical wisdom (law) and love (obedience) that existed in the country at the time. People change. Their spiritual lives, nations revive or decay. Christian witness will go on till Jesus comes. (Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20)

WHAT IF THE LAWS ARE AGAINST YOU?

In different nations and times you will run into laws that seek to limit, block or stop you speaking out for Jesus. Christians through the centuries faced the tough choices of what to do when human law came into conflict with God's commands. You don't always get a third way. Sometimes obeying what God says means having to break a bad man-made law. (Acts 5:25-29) In every case, those that loved God did not flinch from the consequences, even if it meant capital punishment. (Acts 4: 13-31; 5:17-42)

Daniel faced it in the den of lions. His three friends faced it in the fiery furnace. Stephen was stoned to death. James, the brother of Jesus, was killed by the sword. All of the disciples except John died a violent death at the hands of angry governments- and even he

was tortured in boiling oil. Early Christians were flogged, imprisoned, stoned, crucified. Jesus never said it would be easy. Jesus never said it wouldn't cost.

Christians faced it in the coliseums of Rome. Caught and chained, they faced the terror of being torn apart by wild beasts before a jeering crowd, or being set on fire as a ghastly living torch to light the sick spectacles of Roman games. Yet twelve-year olds refused to even drink a toast of wine to Caesar to acknowledge, as he demanded, that he was the only true Lord and "god". They died in the laws of lions rather than deny Jesus. Yet it was said that for every Christian who died in the arena, seven watching romans became Christians. Now more Christians have died for Jesus this century than all the others put together. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. **HOW TO FACE A DEN OF LIONS**

"All men die. Not all men really live." (Mel Gibson in Brave Heart) Daniel and his three friends each were put to the ultimate test: deny God or die. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced the fiery furnace. Daniel had the den of lions. Jesus came into the place of terror with them.

How do you face the ultimate test? God has not promised us that we would not die. **ALL OF US DIE.** Some of us die sooner than others. The only difference in death between a Christian and someone who is not is that the Christian is ready to meet Jesus. A Christian is dead already; dead to the world, alive to Christ. Death for you as a child of God is to fall asleep in His arms and awake in the other world, alive forever beyond the power of pain, safe forever from all sickness and suffering. (I Thess. 4:13; I Cor. 15:49-55; I Cor. 5:1-9)

Daniel and his friends fully knew the cost of loving God and staying true to Him. Faced with the full horror of agonizing death, they did not flinch or turn back. And in both cases, they experienced a wonderful supernatural intervention. Each time, Gods showed up in a way that made even the King worship. God can do it again. Miracles still happen. But from Daniel we can learn three important factors if you have to face your own "den of lions" some day:

(1) Innocency: Keep your heart pure. When Daniel came out of the den delivered by a miracle of God, he said God shut the lions mouths because "innocency was found in him." Don't ever go into a lions den without a **CLEAN HEART.** Get clean from all known sin. When they lowered Daniel into that pit he knew only one thing: his heart was wholly right with God. (Dan. 6:22; Matt. 5:8; Ps. 24:3-5; 51:6-13.)

(2) Forgiveness: Even though the King's own foolishness and pride had created this death sentence for Daniel, Daniel held no grudges. Study his response. There is no railing against the King, no bitterness, no Divine-judgment death threats. "Before you oh King I have done no hurt." Daniel went to the lions holding **NOTHING** against his executors. The early Christians who also faced the lions said "These lions are not our enemies. They are our friends. They will usher us into the Presence of God." Go into the den **FULLY FORGIVING** those who have done you wrong. (Dan. 6:22; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59-60)

(3) Trust in the Lord. The bottom line for every den of lions is "Trust God or die." For some it will be "Trust God and die." Whatever the outcome, when you face your crisis, you must go trusting in nothing or no-one except the Sovereign Living God. "Daniel was taken up out of the den and no manner of hurt was found on him because he believed in his God." (Dan. 6:23; Ps. 4: 3-5; 20:6-9; 37:39-40; 118:5-9; 91:1-16).

WITNESSING TO A "KING"

How do you speak to someone who is in authority over you? How do you appeal to say a parent, a teacher, a boss? What if one who has charge over you is not a Christian and you want to ask them for something they may not understand or agree to?

(1) Practice the peace-maker principle. You have not come to demand. You do not put them down because they do not believe. Paul said: "Fear God. Honor the king.". (See "Negotiation")

(2) Respect the person's position for Jesus sake. Come like Ester with proper honor and respect for their authority. No servant of Jesus has any right to speak to a person of rightful authority with arrogance.

(3) Present if possible, a "Third Way." Use what we have already given you in presenting a position to a person you hope to influence. But remember this difference: God has allowed them at present to be in authority over you. This fact must temper all you do. "Do not rebuke an elder" God says "but entreat them as a father." (I Tim. 5:1)

In making your request, make it in faith and in heart-submission to Jesus through this persons' authority. Trust that God can work in and through them, even if they don't know God. Remember Nebuchadnezzar. Sometimes even unsaved people see things in your life you can't or don't, and will make a decision that is right for you, even if it is one you don't like. If God really wants you to do it, He will work it out eventually. Don't think that denial or delay are always things outside God's will.

(4) You are to honor and obey your "king" in all things their area of authority except where their decision is a direct violation of the law of God. Do not treat lightly any idea of disobedience to legitimate authority. If what you want is only a want and not a word from the Lord, submit to a denied request as you would if Jesus said "No." If for instance you want to go to a Christian concert and your parent forbids you, don't assume their denial violates God's command to "assemble yourselves together." Don't put in some "spiritual" reason for something much simpler God may not even be in. Learn to submit your wants and wishes to another. You will earn the right to be heard and perhaps from this grow faster in Jesus than if you always got what you want. "Submit yourselves ... as to the Lord."

CHANGING A LEADERS' HEART

What if you believe God really wants you to do something but your "king" may not let you? What if what you want to ask is not really a Bible law and (their denial of your request will not break any law of God) but you still think it is God's will? If you find yourself in this situation, you have a special avenue of appeal.

Prov. 21:1 speaks of a special situation. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." (NIV) What if you are unable to plead with someone over you in authority? Then you are a good candidate for a miracle of God. At times the Lord can actually change the choices or preferences of those in authority to accomplish His purposes in those under their authority. It is a supernatural, miraculous influence directly on the minds and hearts of rulers. It is not a right, nor a rule, but a special act of grace and mercy. And you can ASK God for it.

You can pray: "Lord, I believe you want me to do this, but my authority may not let me. You have power over their authority. I submit wholly to Your will. If you want me to do this, change their hearts so I can do what I believe You want without violating their charge over my life."

He may grant it in a wonderful way. God uses these "will-freezes" to accomplish His purposes in Scripture; to fulfill prophecy, provide for and protect His servants, sometimes to accomplish judgment on sin or rescue for a saint. (Dan. 4:23-25; Exodus 7:13; 10:1; Deut. 2:30; John 19:18-24; Luke 4:28-30) What God did once He can do again. All the promises of God are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus. You can only ask.

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