

Course 115 - Authority

Lesson 1: General Introduction

This course will examine the concept of authority to ascertain the mind of God. It is essential that the household of faith balance two seeming opposites: Liberty and Order. Standing as a pivot between these two concepts and lifestyles is the critical issue of authority. These questions will be answered through the various presentations:

- What really is Authority?
- What is the basis of Authority?
- Who is an authority and on what basis?
- What do we owe authorities in the society
- What do we owe authorities in the Church
- What is the "sword" of authority?
- What are the dangers of coming against authority
- How should authority be exercised in the Church

We shall also consider these precious but misunderstood and misapplied concepts -

- Mentorship, Apostolic Fatherhood, Covering and Accountability
- The place of loyalty in the New Testament Church.

What really is authority? Romans 13: 1- 7

Simply put, from a Kingdom point of view, authority is the degree of the Kingdom mandate divinely conferred upon a chosen vessel for the purpose of positively influencing His people to relate with Him the way they ought to.

In the case of civic authority, it is the God ordained capacity to influence and lead people to do what is right in this present dispensation of life until the perfect state when the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of Christ.

In effect, just as the Law was a school master to hold humanity in check until grace came, so has God ordained that humans will be ruled by governments and civic authorities until such a time as Christ will come to run the only perfect government in the future phase of the Kingdom of God.

The Basis of human authority

In the complexity and simplicity of the God head, all authority on earth is vested in the person of Jesus Christ Colossians 2:10! When He was incarnated, it was to meet the legal grounds of being the Potentate over this planet. This planet was given by a divine legal deed to sons of men. Psalms 115:16. As Hebrews 2: 1- 18 explains, Jesus was incarnated to empathize with human kind. This explains why He stated clearly after the resurrection that all authority in heaven and earth has been handed over to Him. Matthew 28:18. This issue is also put into proper perspective in Philippians 2:5 -11. This affirms the testimony of Colossians 1: 15 – 20 about the centrality of Christ in the Kingdom of God. In any case, all things were created by Christ and for His glory. John 1: 3.

From a functional point of view, the Lord delegates a measure of this awesome authority to human vessels of His own choice to utilize in leading other people – in civil society as well as in the present visible phase of the Kingdom of God – which is the called out ones. Since the fall, human government has been an instrument for holding back the inbred narcissist tendencies of mortals.

Even though generality of human beings prefer the ease and deceitfulness of sinful life, the Lord still exercises care to lift those He wills and brings down those who are not approved. Romans 13: 1- 6 therefore makes it clear that all human authorities are set in place and derived their validity from God. Those who resist authority therefore are deemed to resist God Himself!

While many struggle with this profound truth, much more people even struggle at the reality that God has not permitted the present phase of His Kingdom to operate as a headless monster in which people can do whatever they please. The same Holy Spirit that brings liberty is the same Holy Spirit that keeps everything on earth in order.

The instrument through which the Lord exercises His headship of the Church is the human authorities He sets in place and who remain connected to Him.

Authority is conferred therefore on whom the Lord wills. However, in the divine economy, those who are recipients of this gracious blessing of God are supposed to show their suitability by allowing the Holy Spirit to develop in them the quality of character fit for purpose. In other words, authority is conferred while character is developed for sustaining its validity. A sinning human authority in the church, for instance, negates the authority of God who demands holiness of the who walk with Him 1 Peter 1: 15, 16. In the same way, he who rules over the affairs of men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Otherwise, he or she becomes a tyrant who becomes unfit to lead.

Two extremes must be avoided in looking at the subject matter. The first is the perspective of those engrossed with the spirit of religion. Here, authorities are presented as the be all. The result is a stiffness and evident misuse of authority to enslave the saints and stifle their growth in Christ. On the other extreme is the concept of liberty espoused by the Pseudo Kingdom advocates. Here, authority is despised and presented as an oppressive mechanism which constrains liberty. Back of this mindset is the very plan of Satan to unleash in the closing chapter of this age, the spirit of lawlessness and disorder.

It is a trite issue to remind us that every where people live in a state of lawlessness, holistic progress is stifled and uncertainty rules the atmosphere. Countries with this feature often end up as Banana republics irrespective of natural resources. Authoritarian regimes where leaders are not subject to God also end up as mockery of government. Even dysfunctional families are often known by one glaring fact: absence of law and order often defined by the absence or lack of engagement of fatherhood.

The third and truthful way is that which is anchored on the Word of God. The Word of God is the ultimate authority that governs the life of saints and describes the course of history unto the end. Interestingly, both the religious spirit and the pseudo Kingdom gospel are known by their deviations from the Word. Religion adds to the Word while the Pseudo Kingdom gospel subtracts from essential core of the Word!

The Word of God makes it clear that the ultimate trump card of Satan in the last days will be to foist on the world an evil personality aptly called the man of sin; the man of lawlessness or the son of perdition. 2 Thessalonians 2: 3, 4. All the titles for the anti Christ point to one truth: lack of order is of Satan. Rejection of authority amounts to rejection of Christ Himself who is the Head of all Principality and Power Colossians 2:10.

Speaking of authority, Jesus Christ marvelled at the faith of the Centurion and proclaimed his faith as the greatest He saw in Israel. It is note worthy that the Centurion's faith was anchored on his understanding of the principle of authority! Matthew 8: 5 – 13.

Whoever is afraid of authority has not attained maturity in Kingdom life. Authorities are set in place for good and not for evil. True authorities will therefore see themselves primarily as privileged to be raised up to point people to the ultimate authority which is God and to lead the saints to worship Him in Spirit and Truth. True authority will empower, not suppress the saints. True authority will not take advantage of the weak, the vulnerable or the seekers.

True authority is gender blind. Male and female, God made them in the beginning after His own image and likeness. The original dominion mandate of mankind was therefore made to the he and the wo(mb) – man. Genesis 1: 26 – 31 Interestingly, the dominion mandate never gave mankind authority to dominate fellow humans but rather, all other creation of God. Domination happens when you impose your will on others and deprive them of the God given opportunity to decide how much of themselves they are willing to submit to God and how yielded they are to the Holy Spirit. God has wired human beings with the will and conscience so that there will be a just basis of assessing everything done in the Body on the Last Day which some mock at as a phantom

Lesson 2: Critical Questions on the subject matter of Authority

At this stage of our discourse, we need to fall back on Course 114: Leadership in the Household of Faith to review some strategic revelations the Lord brought forth which concern authorities.

Question 1. Since the whole Body is a living organism which each part functioning for the overall benefit of the whole under Christ as the head, are human vessels, functioning as authorities and leaders, still necessary in a New Testament assembly of saints?

Answer: Yes indeed! Though the whole Body is a living organism, Christ Himself deemed it necessary to appoint five sets of people – Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to represent His headship office in the Body. When we receive their gifts and callings, we receive Christ who appointed them. Ultimately, authorities are simply under shepherds of the Great Shepherd Himself! That some people have messed up and misused authority to build humanistic and religious empires does not in any way negate the Word of God which abides forever! In any case there will at any given time be brethren who need to be instructed in the Word. Those called to teach them are authorities appointed by God for that purpose.

Question 2. Why is leadership essential in the Household of faith?

Answer: There are a number of reasons why leadership is essential. In these scriptures, the Lord articulates the reasons:

2.1 Ultimately, every true leader is an authority appointed by God. They therefore represent Him. Lives of those put in authority should reflect and represent Him.

2.2. Leaders are set in place to ensure that order is maintained. Without order, nothing can work as chaos will ensue.

2.3 Leadership is set to inspire good works amongst the saints.

2.4 Leaders are put in place to exercise discipline where necessary. They do not bear the sword of authority in vain.

Question 3. What do we owe Leadership? Romans 13: 1-8; Hebrews 13:7, 17

Answer: We owe leadership these responsibilities:

3.1 Discern and Recognize them as leaders. Discernment is critical because what you perceive of leaders will influence your response to them.

3.2. Accept them in good faith, putting aside our past experiences so that our past does not trap the present or future.

3.3 Understand the level of grace, authority and anointing deposited in them in order to receive.

3.4. Obey instructions and Submit to their authority. Submission is of critical import because it is the acid test of true leadership. Someone once quipped that he who claims to be a leader with no one following is only going for a walk! We do not have to understand all details of an instruction before obeying. One can obey an instruction without submitting to a leader. This is where the obedience was grudgingly or executed rebelliously. Submission is a heart attitude which allows the leader to lead.

Undoubtedly, obedience and submission is not absolute. It is to the degree that what they lead us to do is not unscriptural and does not wound our conscience.

3.5. Take our place beside them in the grand project God committed to their trust and has called us to be helpers of the work. (See also 1 Chronicles chapter 12: 1-38). The greatest thing we can do with and for true leadership is to occupy our niche in the spirit and release the gifts and callings of God in us.

3.6. Love them as unto the Lord. Leaders are human beings with souls. They will be encouraged greatly when the people they are leading shower them with genuine godly love. Leaders will be

lifted to receive telephone, email, letters, cards and text messages appreciating their leadership. Their inner beings react instinctively to acts of love from the flock of Jesus Christ.

3.7. Honour them – 1 Thessalonians 5: 12,13. Do not wait for a leader to die before you honour him or her with expressive funeral orations! That is pharisaic at its worst. Honour them while they live. Appreciate them and show them how much they mean to you.

3.8. Bless them as much as lies in us. We are called to sow back to those who invest spiritually in us in all good things. Galatians 6:6. This same principle is upheld by Jesus Christ in Matthew 10: 9 – 14 and in 1 Corinthians 9: 7 – 14. The scriptures up the ante in 1 Timothy 5: 17, 18 by charging those who sit under leadership which is truly worthy to reward them with double measure of blessings. It is important that this generation of saints take heed to this injunction. We live in an age where saints write fat checks to popular television preachers including those who peddle error and have become agents of Satan. The same people put miserable change in their local assembly tills or wherever God feeds them spiritually.

The grand puzzle: Just as no one can validly claim love of God without loving fellow humans who are visible, no saint can claim to submit to God and His will who lightly esteems the instructions of a godly leader.

Question 4. What should we do when leaders step on our toes?

Answer: there may be times when in our walk with a leader, he or she seems to step on our toes. Our response or reaction should be moderated by these factors:

4.1. Understand that you cannot validly assume knowledge of why they took the course of action which resulted in your hurt. God may well be using them to draw out the real you!

4.2. Give them benefit of doubt. Put the best construction on what happened; put it behind!.

4.3. If you are not able to bear it spiritually, proceed to option two. Approach the leader in a spirit of meekness and humility, explaining your hurt. Avoid egotism, haughtiness and disrespect in so doing. Matthew 18: 15; Galatians 6:1, 2.

4.4. Avoid the spirit of hurt from latching onto your spirit and soul as well as the spirit of rejection. These satanic agents are on the prowl seeking whoever will open the door for them to devour. Resist Satan and all attempts to manipulate you to feel bad; remain sour and disconnected from fellowship. 1 Peter 5: 8,9.

4.5 Understand that God uses leaders to rebuke, correct, chastise or discipline you out of His divine love for you. Look beyond the human instruments or the way or tone of their voices. Realise that the purpose of God is to present you faultless at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12: 5 – 11.

4.5 Believe the word that whether the leader deliberately offended you or not, all things shall work together for your good. Romans 8:28 – 39, if you handle offences from leaders well.

Question 5. What do I do when leaders err or fall into sin?

Answer: Leaders are humans and therefore can make mistakes or even miss God at any point in time in their lives and ministry. When this happens:

5.1 Take it to God in prayer in earnest intercession for their souls. This is easier if we have formed the godly habit of interceding for our leaders. We should not only pray for greater anointing on them. We should also pray that the Lord will deliver them from every snare of Satan and evil associations which will drain away the grace of God. We should pray for leaders to overcome all temptation of worldliness; love of money, immorality of every sort and indeed all tendencies which do not glorify God.

5.2 Avoid the temptation of sitting in judgement over them. God says He alone is qualified to judge those He sets in leadership. Trust that God will do what seems right to Him and not the leader or us. Romans 14: 4, 7 – 13

5.3. If the Holy Spirit leads us, we can lovingly but gently confront them in a way that is not designed to shame them. Otherwise, we can refer the matter to the authority/leaders they submit to. Be wary of sitting under a leader who submits to no one! Every father needs a father too! That way, saints are safe under the leader and tyranny is avoided.

5.4. Never celebrate the fall of your leader or participate in any glorification of his/her fall. This is a very dangerous ground to stand on! What you sow, you may well reap!

5.5. If you are persuaded that a leader has missed it in terms of lifestyle, doctrine or that your soul is in danger of contamination if you continue to be under that covering, the best way is to prayerfully receive direction on how to separate yourself from that work. Obey God!

Question 6. What is the sword of authority? Romans 13:4, 5

Answer every true leader carries a 'sword of authority'. It is God given the ability to

6.1 Render a negative report to God concerning a brother or sister who is rebellious or disruptive. Romans 13:2; Hebrews 13:17.

6.2. Pronounce the degree of discipline necessary to deal with the negative behaviour.

6.3. Hand over a recalcitrant sinner to Satan to deal with the flesh so that the spirit is saved. 1 Corinthians 5: 1-5

6.4. Render a good report concerning someone to God. Hebrews 13:17

6.5 Release a word of blessing for those who serve well under them to prosper Romans 13:3, 4
To be continued

Lesson 3 - Paradox of Residual & Delegated Authority + Cases

The paradox of authority lies in the fact that every saint is a residual authority and yet the Lord sovereignly delegates His authority to some people for the sake of guiding His people!

Residual – All saints are equipped with residual authority to manifest their ambassadorial credentials to this present evil world. This residual authority is conferred at the point of conversion from sinner to saint and the transition from light to darkness. At this point, there is a switch of kingdoms and primal allegiance. From darkness, the newly born again saint becomes translated or conveyed into the Kingdom of God, mediated by the propitiatory blood that Jesus shed at the cross of Calvary. At this point, the first two of the 4 dimensional work of the Holy Spirit occurs, automatically: 1). The saint is Sealed unto the day of redemption 2). The Saint is United into the Body of Christ. The initial seal measure wires in the saint however, the root/basic gifts which define his/her essential spiritual DNA. Ephesians 4: 1- 8; 1 Peter 4: 10,11. Each saint is thus equipped be a personal representative of Jesus Christ and anointed to represent Him on earth. Acts 1:8. To the saints, who have a revelation of His divinity, Jesus conferred the keys of the Kingdom in Matthew 16:18, 19.

Delegated – Notwithstanding this great residual authority which all saints have, there are still those God specially calls and delegates to guide and serve His people. These include the 5 fold – Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers – whose core assignment is to represent Christ to the Church, equip the saints for the work of ministry so that they can mature quickly to know who they are in Christ and who He is in them. Ephesians 4: 11, 12. Beyond them, there are all kinds of delegated authorities of God positioned in the Kingdom (both in the Church and the Market place) to guide His people to fulfil their destinies.

As Romans 13: 1-7 and Hebrews 13: 7, 17 show clearly, authority comes from God and must be received and celebrated as such. Those who disregard or dishonour authority are involved in a dangerous game. It may be necessary therefore to look at some instances from scripture.

Case Studies on Leadership and the Sword of Authority.

Noah. This man was, in practice, Patriarch of the entire human race. He had a profound

testimony of being one who pleased God for which he and his family alone were saved when the deluge occurred. Genesis 6. After the flood, Noah missed it one day and went drunk with much wine. His son Ham saw and celebrated his nakedness while Shem and Japheth covered him up in awe and respect. When Noah woke up, he exercised the sword of authority and placed a curse on Ham that was to define the course of human history. He also blessed Shem and Japheth whose descendants have long enjoyed those proclamations. Genesis 9: 20 – 27.

Moses. Here was a man whose ways pleased God beyond measure and God Himself testified that Moses enjoyed the privilege of face to face conversation. God also testified that He was the meekest of persons. What happened with people who rose against him offers us an insight into the power of authority in leadership.

- Miriam, his own senior sister once dissembled when Moses 'made the mistake of marrying an Africa' (Marriage outside Jewry was deemed unthinkable!). When Miriam rallied a family rebellion with Aaron against Moses, God judged her with Leprosy, the most outstanding punishment other than killing. Numbers 12: 1 – 15.

- Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against the Authority of Moses and the result was they and their families were on record as the first people to transit from this side of eternity to hell! Numbers 16: 1- 40.

- The greatest sin of Israel was the sin of rebellion and murmuring against their human leaders and God. A journey of 40 days became an ordeal of 40 years. All those who rebelled in the wilderness perished and only Joshua and Caleb survived because of the obedience to God and submission to His human assign, Moses. Only those two out of all the adults who left Egypt got any inheritance. What a great lesson!.

Samuel. As the National Prophet of Israel, he heard from God and gave instructions to Saul to destroy Amalek completely. Saul obeyed partly and veered off into what he thought was best. The result was a stinging reproof and permanent loss of the crown. 1 Samuel 15: 1 – 32.

David. David offers us great insight into how God wants us to treat authority, even when they miss it. This young man had been anointed to be King as a teenager. Unfortunately, the previous King, Saul, was still physically on the throne. Twice, David had the opportunity to kill Saul but refused to touch one who had been anointed (though backslidden and out of favour with God). The moving accounts of both incidents are recorded in 1 Samuel 24: 1- 24 and 1 Samuel 26: 1 – 25. No wonder God never allowed any man to kill David, even when he sinned and rather he enjoyed the mercy of God.

Jesus. Jesus respected both secular and spiritual authority. In Luke 20: 20 – 25, Jesus let the people know that submitting to human governance was the right thing to do when people inquired whether they should pay tax to Caesar. When the High Priest questioned Him, Jesus was very respectful. Even when an officer struck Jesus unjustly, He did not react angrily. Jon 18: 19 – 24.

Jesus decreed great judgement for cities and peoples who reject the gospel and persecute missionaries. Matthew 10: 5 – 38. It is important that we understand these fundamental truths!

Peter. When Ananias and his wife Sapphira lied to Peter and the Apostles concerning how much they sold their property, Peter gave us an insight into what happens when believers misrepresent facts to leaders: it is the unseen but ever present Holy Spirit that is lied to. Peter pronounced what seemed a harsh judgement on the couple. In truth, the idea was to purge the nascent Church of the old leaven of hypocrisy and lying. Acts 5: 1 – 11.

When the sorcerer of Samaria tried to bribe his way to receive the Holy Spirit and use Him for impure motives, Peter exercised the sword of authority and the man went blind for a season. Acts 8: 9 – 24.

Paul – He exercised the sword of authority a number of times. To the Thessalonians, he enjoined in 1 Thessalonians 5: 14 and 2 Thessalonians 3: 6 – 12 to warn those who are disorderly and lazy to change or be thrown out of fellowship. Paul also exercised the sword of authority in 1 Corinthians 5: 1- 13 to decree that brethren who live in immorality should be disfellowshipped and handed over to Satan to torment their physical bodies so that they can repent and embrace the Lord again. In 2 Timothy 4: 14 – 16, Paul pronounced judgement on Alexander the Coppersmith who did him much harm.

In Acts 23: 1- 5, we see Paul apologize to the High Priest for calling him a white washed wall. Paul then went on to cite the law which forbids people from speaking evil of their rulers.

John. Widely called the Apostle of Love, John wielded the sword of authority when he issued a decree concerning Diotrephes who loved pre-eminence and resisted his instructions. 3 John 9 – 10.

Remedies for falling foul of authority.

There are many ministers and saints today who are suffering from exercise of the sword of authority against them. It could be expressly pronounced curses or wounds emitting from the heart or minds of authorities they served under. Hebrews 13:17 is very clear that every leader makes two types of reports to God concerning those who serve under them, viz:

- The report of Joy concerning those who serve well with them and are truly submitted.
- The report of pain which goes up from their hearts/minds/tongues concerning those who make leadership a great pain.
- The word of God is clear that report of pain from a leader is UNPROFITABLE for the brother or sister for whom its being made.

Those who pretend authority is powerless are living in delusion! Nothing could be further from the truth. The ground norm is this: Genesis 8:22 and Galatians 6:7,8 establish a powerful law which rules in all of creation: what a man sows, he shall reap. If you have laboured in craftiness with authority or have not truly submitted to authority, one has sowed an evil seed which will germinate and yield a harvest! By the law in Genesis 5: 1-3, everything reproduces after its kind. So rebellion will beget rebellion. Craftiness will beget craftiness and such like.

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Praise God there is a remedy! That remedy is encapsulated in these words:

- Repentance: If the Holy Spirit has convicted you that you fell foul of authority at one time or the other, confess your sin, repent of it and renounce that behaviour. The mercy of God is always released for those who are able to humble themselves and acknowledge that they got it wrong. Psalm 51:16,17; Isaiah 66:1,2; 2 Corinthians 7:8 – 13; 1 John 2:1,2
- Restitution: Where necessary, approach the leader you wronged, whether you are still serving with him/her or not and whether he/she knew of your offence or not. Do so with genuine repentance and humility of heart either by a face to face meeting, phone call, text or email and ask for forgiveness. The leader has no reason to demand a pound of flesh. When you do your own part, the onus is on the leader to be gracious like God is to him/her and therefore forgive you and release you. If the leader gets mean and wants a pound of flesh, he/she brings on the ire of God. Ephesians 4: 30-32. God will therefore turn the tables against that leader.
- Application of the principle of breaking of curses by higher authority. If that leader does not willingly reverse any negative word or curse pronounced, feel free to approach any servant of God with a higher authority. Confess the misdeed with that ex-leader honestly and your efforts to seek peace. James 5:16. Ask the higher authority to pray and break those curses and reverse the negative pronouncements. Once you are in line with the word of God, you can claim the

validity of Numbers 23:23, not when you are in error! The higher authority may be led and empowered by God to make peace between you and the former leader.

When we apply these principles, the Kingdom of God is made manifest, the power of the Church is unleashed and Satan is put to shame. This is why Paul told Timothy that we ought to know how to behave ourselves in the Church of the living God which is the ground and Pillar of faith. 1 Timothy 3:15

Why the Lord set High Benchmarks for human authorities

1. Human authorities, functioning as Leaders derive their core validity from the degree to which they allow the Lord to work out His Holy nature in and through them. The directives to those who desire to be overseers in the House hold of Faith in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 reflects this reality. Those who lead stand on solid ground when they pant and hunger after God and refuse any other substitute for Him, including the work in their hands. 1 Timothy 4: 12 – 16.

2. All through scripture, the Lord places great premium on character of those He calls to lead His people. Character gives leaders strength to face fire and overcome all the crafty plans of the enemy. The devil is not often afraid of a leader's ability to manifest signs and wonders because he too can instigate 'miracles'. Satan will however cringe at the sight of a truly holy leader in whom like in Christ, he can find nothing to sustain an accusation. John 14: 30. .When the High Priest Joshua forgot this maxim, it took the grace of God to save him. Zechariah 3: 1- 7. Anointing without character will lead to nuisance! 2 Timothy 3: 10 – 12.

3. By actively manifesting Christ, leaders are able to be His witnesses. The first calling of the leader therefore is to be a witness to the reality that in Christ Jesus, there is sufficient grace to transform lives. Those who will lead by proclamations or physical herding of the sheep are missing a vital ingredient. 1 Peter 5: 1 -4. The best leadership is one clothed with the evident presence of God. This releases a holy aura which compels the saints to give him or her right of way to lead them into the deeper waters of the Spirit. Acts 1:8

Civic authority

Let us learn a vital lesson from the military, its command structure and subjugation of the military to the civilian authority of the Presidency.

The case of President Obama/ General McChrystal – The 'run away General' Stanley McChrystal evidently drank much more liquor than he should and allowed a running mouth to ruin a well decorated military career. Here was a powerful general of one of the greatest fighting forces in America, the leading nation of this generation. He was older and more experienced than the young Barack Obama but the later sits in the Oval Office and the buck of the entire Armed Forces of America stops at his desk. In the wisdom that God granted founding fathers of America, the powerful military which played a critical role in both the war of independence and the civil war was put on leash and made subject to the Presidency. General McChrystal had the world at his feet but forgot this elementary principle that every army recruit learns. Furthermore, the brave general did not have the legendary bit on his lips, to quote James chapter 3: 1- 12.

By the time Barack Obama addressed America from the Rose Garden for a few minutes on Wednesday June 23, General McChrystal had lost his commission and perhaps the military career he so cherished. The General had spoken and the President had acted. When the dust cleared, one inescapable fact was evident: Authority prevailed and will always prevail!

Lesson 5

True and False Authority

In Acts 1:1, we see a very critical truth: the gospel is about all that Jesus began to DO and to TEACH. As it was with Him, so should it be with us in this day and age. If we must understand and exercise true authority, we must look at the Jesus paradigm because He is the head of all principality and power and is the one on whose blood all authority in heaven on earth and underneath the earth hinge Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2: 5 – 11; Colossians 2:10.

For all sons of the Kingdom (neither male nor female, but rather mature saints who know their rights in Christ), the starting point of true authority is coming to an experiential knowledge of the vastness of the authority of Christ. All things were created for Him and for His pleasure Colossians 1: 16, 17.

The appropriate question therefore is this: How did He for whom all things were made and by whom all things were made live? How did He exercise the enormous authority at His disposal when He walked the earth as the incarnated Son? What example did He leave for us to follow? Did He come with a swagger riding like the Knight in shining armour, sitting on a gilt edged throne expecting other people to come and bow every moment to Him? Of course the answer is a big NO!

The uniform testimony of scripture reveals a different kind of leader whose lowly ways, meek spirit and humble mien defied the norm of the religious establishment of His day. He wore no special robe, rode no special chariot and built no personal empire. As a matter of fact, Jesus pointedly instructed His disciples to avoid the ostentatious lifestyles of religious leaders. He instructed them to see exercise of the authority conferred on them as a call to serve others rather than an opportunity to exploit others and be served. Jesus lived with His disciples, ate with them and mentored them from close proximity. They saw Him pray Luke 11: 1- 13; They saw Him hungry Mark 11: 12-14,19,20; They saw Him chase away the merchants who defiled the temple Mark 11:15 - 17. He took the three to the Mount of Transfiguration Matthew 17: 1- 13 and at His time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane Matthew 26: 36 - 45. It is no wonder that on the day of His arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, the religious leaders needed Judas Iscariot, an insider, to identify Him from the group of just 12 people! Matthew 26: 46 - 50. It shows how simple and ordinary Jesus lived. He did not put up barriers but gave the disciples and saints access to Himself. The woman with the issue of blood was able to press through the crowd and touch the hem of His garments. Blind Bartimeus was able to access Him, the great Son of David. O! That God may open our eyes to see the beauty of simplicity and the glory of the plain, ordinary life devoid of the entrapments of human plastic glory! Simplicity with authority is an exceptional combination. It is the way of the Kingdom!

In two critical instances, Jesus brought the message home to His followers in bold relief. One was when the two ambitious sons of Zebedee recruited their mother, to lobby Him for the chief places of honour in the Kingdom. Matthew 20:20 - 28. Jesus went on to tell the two disciples and others who saw through their raw ambition that their paradigm of authority and leadership needed to shift from a carnal/worldly to a spiritual/true perspective. Jesus then explained that exercising authority is not ruler ship of the saints. It is not living and acting like a tyrant and expecting service from others. On the other hand, Jesus explained that exercising authority is truly about sacrificing our esteem and laying down the crowns the Lord has decorated us with in the service of brethren(see verse 28). In other words, Jesus was saying that those who receive authority from Him are supposed to deploy same for the purpose of empowering the saints put in their care.

In this paradigm, we see the strange truth: the more God lifts up a vessel, the onus lies with that person to lay it down as a foot mat for the Lord to use to facilitate feeding and the maturation of saints. When Jesus had the last unforgettable encounter with Peter after the resurrection, He never asked any things of his disciple than to "feed" His sheep/Lambs. John 21: 15 - 17. Feeding sheep or shepherding is a sensitive role. It requires loving the sheep, being sensitive to know their state, looking for the best food and nurturing them to maturity. The outcome of this investment is grown, healthy sheep which produce three assets: they bear other sheep through reproduction; they produce wool for the shearer and they produce milk! How wonderful will the Kingdom be if those God has placed in authority cease to fleece the sheep and rather proceed to patiently invest in their holistic maturation? Well nurtured saints will always grow to be Kingdom Ambassadors. They will live healthy prosperous lives and will lay the blessings God decorates them down for His glory. They will not struggle to tithe into the Kingdom nor will they flinch from supporting the ministers that God uses to shepherd them.

Jesus Himself reflected this service paradigm of authority in John 13: 1- 17. We see again the impetuosity of Peter who declined to be washed. Did Jesus hail his display of "humility"? No, Jesus remonstrated with Peter and went on to specifically direct His disciples to follow His example of serving those they lead John 13: 12 - 17. Jesus demonstrated here that authority is

not to be used to whip people into line but to show them how to live! To serve is to lead! To serve is to live! How essential it is that the Lord opens the eyes of all His saints He has granted great authority that they are all called to model Christ and serve those assigned to them?

It was also in this context that Paul the Apostle scored excellent grades. In 1 Corinthians 11: he issued the battle cry "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"! Those who are vested with authority derive their validity only to the extent that they stay in line with the whole revealed counsel of God. To walk outside the authority of God as revealed in His Word and expect saints to submit to that deviation poses an exceptional challenge to those who know the truth. Jesus derived His enormous authority from the consecration He made concerning life in the body. Of this consecration, Hebrews 1: 9 says He "loved righteousness and hated iniquity" for which the Father anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

We live in the post modern age of the West. In this scenario, humans have attained fairly high ethical standards in business, public service and private life. Those who desire to be Governors, Presidents and even CEO's of corporations start early to live lives which take account the huge and intense media scrutiny which accompany their decisions when made public. In speaking of the present realm of His Kingdom therefore, Jesus announced that the saints would have to walk by higher standards than that of the Scribes and Pharisees Matthew 5:20.

The enormous authority of the Kingdom granted to leaders is for the purpose of ordering and re-ordering things to submit to the higher authority of God in ministries, congregations, the market place, governance and civil society. Their lips are to be used to preach and preach truth, issue godly instructions and release blessings. Lives of authorities should so mirror Christ that even those who do not know Him yearn to see Him after encountering His Kingdom Ambassadors. That is why those in authority need to be intimate with the Lord. Dwelling in the Word, spending time in prayer and cultivating a deep level of sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and His voice are critical imperatives for all those in authority. Paul the apostle knew this reality and pressed into the fullness of Christ as revealed in Philippians 3: 1- 14. The mindset of Paul was that deep communion with God would cause the saints to be changed from glory to glory.

Those who would merchandize their gifts and callings; those who would hawk the prophetic for money miss the whole point. They are putting the cart before the horse. Be an unconditional blessing to those God will bring your way. Do so as unto the Lord and allow the Lord who you serve to determine the vessel(s) He has chosen to bless you and provided for you! Those who are inclined to Popish Rome and its stifling hierarchy and delusions of grandeur marked by ceremonial robes, rings, trained magisterial voices and opulent lifestyles should ask themselves who they represent . Is Jesus projected by such life styles or is He misrepresented? The hour has come when we must examine everything we do. From having pages carry our bibles to insisting on donations (speaking fees) before we accept invitations to minister, the hour has come to ask the critical question – whose Kingdom is projected? Is it that of Jesus or Satan? As ministers import the ways of Hollywood and its sleazy fashion into the Church, we must pause to reflect on what will happen when the Chief Shepherd appears?