

Team Ministry - Lesson 4

Team Leadership and the Use of Authority

I. Foundational Understanding of God-given Authority

A. Authority and the good use of authority are meant to be a reflection God's character

1. Authority within the Trinity addresses "function," not equality of Person

The Father, the Son and the Spirit are all recognized as being equally God [Revelation 5:13; Mark 3:28,29]

However, God "orders" himself for the purpose of doing his will in all things, including salvation, according to an authority structure:

The Father sends the Son to save [John 3:16]

The Son submits to the will of the Father [Hebrews 10:5-7]

The Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son to apply salvation [Jn 16:5-15]

2. God's use of his authority is motivated by his nature: God is Love [I Jn 4:16]

(This is an all-inclusive word that denotes holiness, righteousness, goodness, mercy, compassion and justice, and defines the use of his authority)

Gen 1:31; Psalm 103; Psalm 104; Romans 11:30-36

God's use of authority in every act - creating, saving, redeeming, disciplining, correcting, judging and condemning - are all acts of love and therefore also all work for the good of angels, creation and all mankind.

The nature of God's loving authority is clearly revealed in Christ's commitment to serve [Mark 10:45; Matthew 11:28, 29]

One of the remarkable things about God's authority is his freedom to give authority away to others [Genesis 1:28; Luke 10:2-6, 16; Matthew 16:17-20; Acts 1:8; Revelation 2:26-29]

B. Our authority derives its existence from God and is meant to reflect his character

1. Every sphere of human relationship has an authority structure for the purpose of fulfilling its God-given function

The Family: Ephesians 5:22-6:4

The State: Romans 13:1ff

The Market: Colossians 3:22-4:1

The Church: Hebrews 13:17; Ephesians 4:7-13

In each of these relationships there is an equality of “personhood” (all equally made in the image of God), but an order of submission around the fulfillment of purpose

2. The authority of each person, in every sphere is meant to be motivated by love, humility and service

Re-read the passages above from this perspective

II. Applications to Team Leadership

A. Every team needs a Team Leader

There should always be a sense of a “plurality of leaders.” This reflects the work of the Trinity, and is further evidenced as part of God’s plan for the church in the appointment of Apostles, Elders and Deacons [Acts 14:21-23, 15; Titus 1:5]. However, for the fulfilling of specific functions, it is a reflection of the character of God to have a Team Leader; a designated head, whose authority, though necessarily limited to the “purpose,” is nonetheless real

B. Team Leaders should be making decisions motivated out of love

This requires both a gospel focus, and gaining wisdom through mutual submission and seeking the counsel of others [Acts 15:1-21]

C. Team Leaders should use their authority to give it away to others, and seek to bring every gift on the team to full expression.

Needs to be a clear leader, but with every team member knowing he/she is there to help them enter into their own leadership and exercise of gifts [Ephesians 4:12ff

III. Redeemed Team Leadership

- A. Because of the problem of the sinful human nature, there are often tensions around leadership - either too aggressive and domineering, or no acceptance of the responsibility to lead.

Contrast of two styles of leadership - CEO / Consensus Leader

1. Leader from the Top

C.E.O. -- a director -- asks the question, "What do I want the team to do?"

a. Character

i. Natural leadership gifts

Often has charisma; warm personality. This is why people will follow this person. (This is not a bad thing; the real question is whether it will be kept under influence of the Spirit)

ii. Clear vision

At minimum, a clearer sense of where the team needs to go than the other team members. But usually he/she has a strong sense of what God wants to do. A planner, though not necessarily the one to carry out the details

iii. Enthusiasm

Often a high energy level; communicates that to others. Says, "Charge!" and then looks to see where everybody is

iv. Activistic

A doer. Ready to do it quickly - yesterday. Sometimes has a new plan every week

v. Unpredictable

In the eyes of others. Good side -- often sees issues that need to change before others do and in seeking to bring that change, appears unpredictable. Bad side -- team gets nervous; obligations not met; plans set aside as quick as new ones are made

b. Areas for growth

- i. Tends to have a desire to be in control of everything. Because of stronger gifts and personality, they often get control

People will follow this type of personality. However, the real challenge is going to be in giving others real authority -- even authority the leader may have to submit to. The broader a movement reaches, the more control is going to have to be shared. There is only one place to have the freedom to do this: from the security of the Spirit being in control of the giftedness of the body and the power for advancing the kingdom [1 Cor 12; Rom 12; Eph 4]

- ii. Insecurity -- this is the flip side of the need to be in control. This then is the real question this leader must face: Is the Holy Spirit really in control? With all the weaknesses of the various team members? The leader must have a sense of this, or will inevitably move toward control
- iii. Moves too quickly, without enough building of relationships

If the team isn't being led into a sense of the Spirit's control, things can get shaky quickly. Often, one person on the team disagrees heavily with the Team Leader. If the team is not getting their sense of direction and confidence from the Lord, the conflict can bring emotional insecurity

Truly building consensus is hard work. When the weakness of others emerge, the temptation is to throw out practical submission to the Spirit's control -- i.e. he is the one bringing the team members together -- and instead, the "flesh" gets heavily involved

- iv. Defensive, self-justifying answers

Complaint: "You don't see things through, but you defend yourself."

Answer: "I'm just responding to changing needs."

2. Leader from Below

Consensus leader -- unity is the goal -- asks question, "What do we want to do?"

a. Character

- i. Love of peacekeeping – always working for unity, so always trying to put out fires
- ii. Thoughtful – analytical & reflective
- iii. Good Listener – humility here, and loved for it
- iv. Sometimes weak in vision – no strong sense personally of where God wants to take the team/ministry
- v. Fear of Conflict – sometimes excessive
- vi. Lack of Decision-Making confidence - never quite sure what to do as people waver through the difficult process of implementing vision; can make most decisions tenuous

b. Areas for growth

- i. You can get the idea that this type of leader doesn't know what to do. Can labor so much for consensus, there is no real direction.
- ii. The lack of trust in his/her character to make decisive leadership decisions leaves the team functionally without a leader. Things grind to a halt
- iii. While this leader tries to avoid conflict, he/she often becomes the focal point of criticism

B. Biblical Leadership

God-consciousness is central. We need to learn to lead out of fellowship with God. Asks the question: "What does God want us to do?" Grows out of an overwhelming burden to know God. When that is present, other members of the team can confirm the vision because the Spirit of God within them is affirming the same need to bring his love to the world.

1. Character

a. An affirming style

- i. This comes out of the God-consciousness. An awareness that the Holy Spirit has given everyone on the team gifts and grace, which needs to be affirmed [cf I Cor 12]
- ii. The freedom to truly embrace this in the face of team members' weaknesses and even sins is the context of the Gospel. This is the basic affirmation from God that he is for the believer. We are, in fact, simply aligning ourselves with reality [Numbers 23:8-10, 18-23]. We are actually upholding the primacy of the Holy Spirit [cf I Cor 1:1-10]
- iii. This makes the ministry *primarily* one of encouragement; not primarily correcting

b. A modeling style

- i. Especially modeling repentance, faith and the freedom to pursue obedience.
Compare Paul in Romans 6-8; John in I John 1; David in Psalm 51; Jeremiah – Lamentations 3
- ii. Part of the patient love we are meant to exercise with the team comes from acknowledging the reality that although we do not want to simply accept the silliness and foolishness of others, we nonetheless recognize that the weakest person on the team is a reflection of our sin nature.

c. Gentle confrontation

- i. This is the normal (though not exclusive) mode of confrontation. Most times Christ did not use an accusing tone with his disciples, but he often raised questions. His comments to “come and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart” [Matthew 11:28-30], plus the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-4 give us perspective on his frame of mind [Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 16:6-12 cf. even Saul’s conversion Acts 9:1-6]
- ii. This gentleness flows from the reality that God is in control and will fulfill his purposes [Isaiah 42:1-4]. So Paul tells Timothy [2 Timothy 2:24-26] that gentleness is even a part of the equation when someone’s life is captivated by Satan

- iii. However, gentleness does not mean we are not to be specific. It is amazing how direct you can be if people know you love them

d. Communicating style

- i. The CEO often works inwardly in his head, then it all breaks out. Not enough communication. Needs to give lead-time in communication. Often just gives the finished product
- ii. God constantly communicates with his people, and Christ constantly communicated with his disciples [Matthew 16:21, 20:17-19, 26:2]. Sometimes people don't hear [Luke 24:9-11], because their hearts are not ready to hear - but we still need to be sure we are communicating

e. Stabilizing style

- i. The team leader knows the vision and makes the team hold to it. He/she does not want to become unpredictable. You can be full of surprises, and God loves to surprise us with new things we did not see. But there must be a fundamentally high level of integrity from the leader in their commitments to the task
- ii. Most importantly, do what you say. Keep your word. Especially in reference to members of the team. Sometimes you can't. If change is coming, give warning before it happens if at all possible. If you fail, ask for forgiveness freely and openly

Compare Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:15-17

2. Becoming a Biblical Leader

- a. Learn to pray and cry out to God for help [Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-10]

The bottom line problem in becoming this type of leader is a heart problem in relationship with God. People often don't change because we don't know how to pray. When the going gets rough in ministry, you must learn both how to humble yourself before the Lord as well as grow in confidence of God's blessing for your life and the ministry

- b. Become a worship leader for the team

Return to God as the center of everything. Lift God up as the center. Repentance does that. Build on, center on the Word of God and the promises of God and the glory of God [Psalms, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Galatians 1:5, Ephesians 1:3, I Peter 1:3]

c. Keep learning to live out of the power of the Gospel

In the process, you will lose your self-consciousness and grow in God-consciousness -- his love, his kingdom, his purposes. Too much self-consciousness does not bring confidence to the team. But when you are taught by God deeply about his glory and love and purposes, and share that with the team, they will let God lead them through you