

STAYING STRONG: Authority

God wants us to live well and enjoy our life to the fullest so he has placed around us the protection of rules and authority. God is not power hungry nor is He simply demanding mindless obedience to show that He's in charge. God is a loving Father who knows what helps and what hurts us and who clearly communicates that information with us so we can live well. God knows our bent towards self-will and Satan's desire to lead us into destruction by encouraging us to rebel against our Loving God. God, who made us and the world, sets out in the Bible what works in helping us to live life to the full. He describes consequences that will surely come when we try to operate outside of His law of sowing and reaping. These are often not punishments but simply natural consequences of our actions. Little children are too young to know enough to play and live safely. One of the most precious privileges we have as parents is to protect children from harm they don't even know exists. When they scream and throw a temper tantrum simply because something they wanted to have is removed, we still persist in our action in order that they may be protected from the harm we know will be caused to them by having it.

Similarly, we are in need of the loving protection of God in our lives because we are incapable of figuring things out on our own. We desperately need the limits and guidelines He gives to us. Often we will not understand why God is asking us **not** to do something which we really want to do and which may appear harmless to us. We must be humble enough to appreciate that we just don't know everything. We need to trust in God's loving care for us and obey His direction. He's not depriving us of something which **appears** good because He's **no fun** but because He sees the harm that we are unable to see.

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful". (Jeremiah 31:3-4 NIV)

For Christians in recovery, authority begins with the God who made us. We are the created. When what we think or want is different from what God says, God gets the last word and we need to change. God's authority over us is clearly laid out for us in rules and principles found in the Bible. While the Bible was written down by human beings we, as Christians, acknowledge that the writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we can't disregard God's guidance and commands just because we don't like either the author and/or the rules. God speaks truth through His inspired written words and we must allow our character to be shaped by this truth rather than bending the truth to suit our particular habit or way of life.

King David had no question about this when he wrote: ***"God has spoken plainly, and I have heard it many times: Power, O God, belongs to you"*** (Psalm 62:11). Later on another king who was ruler over thousands of people knew that someone greater than he was ruler over all things, and that the final outcome of all situations rested with Him. In the day of that king's trouble he prayed: ***"O Lord, God of our ancestors, you***

alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you!" (2 Chronicles 20:6 NLT) When Jesus' disciples asked him how to pray, Jesus gave them the essentials and in that prayer we find these words: ***"for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."*** (Matthew 6:13 NIV) Every time we pray The Lord's Prayer we are affirming that God is in charge and He has authority to make the rules we live by.

Most of us are well aware that we need to let God be in charge of our lives. The damage we did to ourselves, our families, and to others in the community when we disregarded authority is enough proof that we need to be under authority in order to live well and love well. The problem we have is not in our understanding that God is in control, but in surrendering ourselves to His control.

We all need to have a foundation upon which to stand, and a place or person to whom we are accountable for how we live our lives. We need checks and balance which will enable us to structure our lives around other members of the community and the world at large. God has designated parents, government leaders, community authorities, such as police and courts, church leaders, teachers or bosses to hold some measure of authority in our lives. He calls us to respect those who hold these offices and to submit to their directions. Our recovery is in serious jeopardy when we operate outside the counsel and regulations set by these people. ***For the Lord's sake, accept all authority—the king as head of state, and the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish all who do wrong and to honor those who do right You younger men, accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, serve each other in humility, for God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble.*** (1 Peter 5:13-14, 5:5 NLT)

Should we avoid putting ourselves under authority if someone in our life abused us with their power and authority? No. We still need to welcome authority because it's God's good plan for loving structure around our relationships in community.

Are we willing to walk humbly with God and accept His authority over all? Are we willing to do what He tells us to do even when it is hard and we don't understand why? Are we willing to stop doing things God tells us are wrong, even if everyone else is doing them? Are we willing to wait when something isn't good for us to have right now?

"O people, the Lord has already told you what is good, and this is what he requires: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8 NLT)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Why is living under authority, both God's and man's, so crucial to the success of my recovery?
2. What checks and balances help me structure my life today?
3. When God's will and my desire conflict, what do my actions say about what I actually believe about His loving purposes behind the rules?