

Authority Figures

Abuse of power is common in our world for anyone who has authority. It may be a government that sends money to its friends or a parent who forces a child to do things that are wrong. Supervisors and bosses sometimes communicate their orders in angry inconsiderate ways. Demeaning and shaming someone under authority was one way of gaining submission. Judges sometimes commit the same crimes for which they are sentencing the accused in front of them. In recent times, the officers of financial institutions have abused their power and stolen from the life savings of vulnerable people. The list of example of abuses of authority is endless.

One of the ways people tend to cope with wrong and injustice is to simply throw out they system and start with something new. While we may need to recall a politician from office or have an immoral judge stand down from his bench or put someone behind bars who defrauds others, we cannot do away with a system of rules and limits on human behaviour. Without an authority structure surrounding human beings we would tear each other apart. There are far too many examples of riots and genocide and corruption in our world when authority structures are done away with or abused.

We all need to be under authority. We all need to have a foundation upon which to stand, some place or person to whom we are accountable for how we live our days, and checks and balances around which to structure our lives together with other member of the community and the world at large. The damage we did to ourselves, our families, and to others in the community when we disregarded authority is proof enough that we need to be under authority in order to live well and love well.

So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.
(Genesis 1:27 NLT)

Then the Lord gave me this message, " ... can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand. (Jeremiah 18:5-6 NLT)

All authority has to start somewhere and for Christians, that authority begins with the God who made us. God is very clear that the one in charge is God. He uses the picture of a potter and clay to help us understand that the creator has authority over the created. We are the created. God is in charge. When what we think or want is different from what God says, God gets the last word and we need to change.

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 of Israel who was in charge of thousands, knew that ultimately someone else was in charge and had the final word. He said, ***"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 God is in charge. The problem is not knowing that but surrendering to that when our will and desires cross with God's revealed will. ***"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) Are we willing to walk humbly with God? Are we willing to do what He tells us to do when it is hard - like laying down a resentment and blessing our enemies? Are we willing to stop doing things He tells us are wrong - like lying or being lazy? Are we willing to wait when our sponsor or our pastor suggest to us that something isn't good for us right now?

God has designated parents, government leaders, community authorities such as police and courts, church leaders, teachers or bosses to hold some measure of authority. He calls us to respect those who hold these offices and to submit to their directions: ***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.*** (1 Peter 5:13-14 NLT)

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 5:5 NLT)

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. Our recovery is in serious jeopardy when we operate outside the counsel and regulations these people offer us.