

## Chapter 7

### Authority: God's Training Device for Faith

The word "authority" can conjure up all sorts of images, either positive or negative depending on your framework. Authority *is not* authoritarianism. Authoritarianism uses power and position to control and conform people to meet someone's agenda. It serves the interests of the few who dominate the many. In the Church this system can even use the Scriptures as a series of regulations to control the flock. Authoritarianism will never produce responsible spiritual growth.

*Authority*, on the other hand, is based on love, not power. Authority is given by God for the orderly passing along of a loving obedience to Him to succeeding generations. Authority confronts the selfish and self-centered focus of human nature and, through instruction and role-modeling, helps a person live for purposes beyond his own personal goals.

From a biblical standpoint authority entails the right to praise or to punish, to include or to exclude. Peter presents particular purposes for authority: "*Submit yourselves for **the Lord's sake** to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to **punish** those who do wrong and to **commend** those who do right*" (1 Peter 2:13,14). Paul puts forth the responsibility to protect the Body: "*When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, **hand this man over to Satan**, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 5:4,5).

The operation of authority embodies a *jurisdictional limit*, or boundary. Within his jurisdiction the person in authority has certain supervisory responsibilities and a defined framework in which to function. For instance, the authority of a parent is limited to his or her household. A policeman in Colorado cannot arrest someone in New Mexico. The President of the United States has no authority in France. This seems obvious, doesn't it? Yet in the church, the biblical lines of jurisdiction and authority have become blurred.

In the early Church, elders pastored the *men*, who then "pastored" their own families. The Bible states that a man has jurisdiction over his family: "*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior*" (Ephesians 5:22,23). Again, "*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord*" (Colossians 3:18).

The incursion by clergy into a husband's jurisdiction has left many men feeling undermined as they have tried to carry out the biblical responsibilities for their families. The pastor, youth group leader, or Sunday School teacher displaces the father's spiritual influence in his family. *Fathers* are commanded to "*bring [their children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord*" (see Ephesians 6:4). If the church jumps in too readily to fill the need, why should a father bother? How much more biblical if an older man came alongside these men to train them to train their families!

Why are men so conspicuous in their absence from faith community participation? Not only do many men feel inferior when they compare themselves to their pastor or youth group leader, they also feel uncomfortable in settings in which people "spill their guts" in front of each other. While women often are able to share openly in any kind of gathering, men often are embarrassed to do so, especially in mixed company. To avoid discomfort the men just stay away from any church involvement at all.

Does this mean that wives and children whose husbands and fathers shun congregation participation have no "court of appeal" if they are suffering abuse? Not at all.

Shepherding elders are responsible to protect and counsel those in distress. But clergy who lord their position over other men are treading on the jurisdiction of these individuals.

Biblical jurisdiction is an extremely important issue for God's shepherds to consider. The unchecked pattern of clergy elevation has resulted in spiritual irresponsibility among husbands and fathers. Mike asked a number of church leaders if they used programs designed to compensate for fathers who were negligent in the spiritual training and oversight of their families. Everyone admitted that many of their programs were designed with that purpose in mind. Instead of coming alongside the man to shepherd him to be a biblical husband and father, the leadership substituted programs that interfered with his jurisdictional responsibilities. The personal investment of time and care that would have modeled godly home leadership had been replaced by increased knowledge dissemination that cost the leader nothing personally.

## Authority in a Nutshell

Authority and leadership are not necessarily synonymous. Among God's people, all men who have authority should be able to lead. However, not all leaders have authority.

Biblically, both men and women are capable of leading. Yet *authority* is reserved for men within their jurisdictional boundaries. Consider this: A football coach has full authority over his team. The coach is the one who puts players into the game and takes them out. He decides who to include or who to remove from the team. Although the team captain may *lead* the team, he has no authority over the players. Similarly, deacons may lead by displaying God's charitable concern for people, but the Bible does not give them authority in their faith communities. A worship leader may facilitate worship, but he or she does not have authority over the people.

"Delegated authority" refers to the limited responsibility a person in authority grants. It should be commensurate with the task to be accomplished. The conditions and limits of this responsibility are normally stipulated in advance. For instance, a father has authority over his children. He may give a babysitter certain responsibilities commensurate with taking care of his children. But authority over the children always rests with the parent.

The foundational understanding of authority is summed up in the phrase, "The buck stops here." In our faith communities and families our Father establishes those who are in authority: *"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"* (Romans 13:1). He will *not* accept excuses from those in positions of authority who fail to fulfill their responsibilities. And He will not allow those who exercise authority to blame the ones in their care when they themselves have failed.

In officer candidate school Mike was taught the only acceptable response when confronted by a senior officer: "No excuse, sir!" After several years in the Navy, he began to read the Bible for the first time. One of the things he noticed immediately was that God didn't accept excuses either. Moses had tried to use his speech impediment as an excuse to stay out of Egypt. When he pushed his point, *"the Lord's anger burned against Moses"* (Exodus 4:14). From personal experience Mike could understand that kind of "heat." When the Lord undertook to recruit Gideon to fight the Midianites, the fearful man offered an excuse: *"My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family"* (Judges 6:15). Yet armed with God's assurance, he still ended up leading his troops.

Ponder these Scripture examples:

- When confronted about eating the fruit, Adam could have sought God's forgiveness; that is, the buck of responsibility could have stopped with him. Instead, he forfeited his jurisdiction by blaming his wife, and they were cast from the Garden of Eden.
- King Saul was confronted by Samuel for failing to completely destroy the Amalekites. The monarch blamed his fear of the people for his act of disobedience. For passing the buck, Saul lost the kingdom, his jurisdiction.
- King David repented for adultery and murder when confronted by the prophet Nathan. By taking full responsibility through repentance and by *not* passing the buck, David kept his kingdom.

When parents habitually blame their children for the sorry condition of their own lives and excuse themselves for not having fulfilled their parental responsibilities, they risk the possibility of losing jurisdiction over their offspring. Cults today are filled with the children of Christian parents who forfeited their jurisdiction through negligence or blame.

Now think about how all this ties in with God's view of church authority: "*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you*" (Hebrews 13:17). This verse encompasses two areas of responsibility. First, the Lord commands *all his people* to submit to the authorities who render account to Him for their souls. These are the men who are willing and able to be where "the buck stops." God tests the humility and submission of His people by establishing a particular criterion: Do they make it a *joy* for those in authority to have them under their care?

Second, the Lord demands that those in authority, the men who are willing to be the "buck stoppers," render account to Him about *each one* over whom they watch. Any excuses for not knowing the condition of each person become grounds for removing their jurisdiction.

Do you have an intimate relationship with an older shepherd—a caring man who is rendering account for you as part of his flock? Pause to ask God how you might help to make his work a joy rather than a burden. Those who are entrusted with leadership are delighted to see members of the flock taking on joyful responsibility on behalf of each other. For those in authority there is great delight when the people for whom they are responsible seek and obtain God's wisdom: "*My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad*" (Proverbs 23:15).

Remember, submission to authority was nothing new to the Hebraic people. In fact, their ancestors themselves had submitted to the authority instituted by God among His chosen people: "*Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you.*' So I took the leading men of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them to have **authority over you**—as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens and as tribal officials" (Deuteronomy 1:13,15). The need for order demands that authority and administration be entrusted into capable hands.

In light of this understanding, Peter could write to the believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire: "*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right*" (1 Peter 2:13,14). Jesus had not raised up a church of revolutionaries or insurrectionists. On the contrary, in those matters in which the Word of God was not violated, his followers were to be models of obedience.

Jesus was pleasantly astonished to discover in the Roman centurion an understanding of deference to authority that paralleled His own relationship with His Father. That is why

this man who had charge over a hundred could be commended by Jesus for his strong faith. When Jesus spoke, the soldier could readily identify His submission to His Father's authority. In that light the centurion was assured that Jesus' words would be accomplished.

*The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a **man under authority**, with **soldiers under me**. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (Matthew 8:8-10).*

Jesus was truly under His Father's authority, for all that He said and did was aimed at giving glory to His Father in heaven. This fact was readily recognized by the throngs. Throughout the gospels, whenever Jesus did a mighty work, the people *praised God*.

Because Jesus bore authority as the Anointed One of God, He could delegate authority to His disciples to drive out evil spirits in His Name—and the spirits, recognizing the authority in the name of Jesus, had to obey! *"He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matthew 10:1).*

Power in the spiritual realm comes from the One with the most authority. Therefore, the presence of the Spirit of Christ in each true follower of Jesus offers the same power today to drive out the workers of the enemy: *"I have given you **authority** to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome **all the power** of the enemy; nothing will harm you" (Luke 10:19).* Trusting reliance in the Person Who has given this authority to His people brings about victory in spiritual confrontations. (See our book *Demolishing Strongholds* for more on the subject of spiritual warfare.)

With the requirements of the atonement for sin fully and irrevocably fulfilled, the resurrected Messiah could leave His disciples prepared to receive spiritual power from on high. All they needed was His delegated authority to carry out His mission on earth: *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20).*

Remember, without the authority of the Lord Jesus, these men were ordinary, unschooled laborers. That was obvious to the Sanhedrin whom they confronted (see Acts 4:13). Under His authority, however, these common men were able to shake the world.

## Godly Submission: A Matter of Choice

At the retreat ministry, we led a singles group representing over fifteen congregations. When the group first began, most of the women lived alone, away from family or roommates. The average age of the ladies was around thirty, and most of them wanted to be married. After several months we helped a number of the women realize that they had developed a strong attitude of independence and self-will when they had fled the protection of their father's authority. By allowing themselves to be available to almost any guy who called, many had become hardened to trusting God for the husband He was preparing.

Out of concern, Mike initiated an unusual requirement for the group: Before any man could date the ladies, he had to first ask permission from either the woman's father, her pastor, or Mike! At first there was some moaning, but soon the women began to feel cherished as jewels of the Lord. And their willingness to have an authority in their lives weeded out the men with wrong motives!

Another interesting point surfaced as the women were able to treat the men as brothers rather than as potential dates. A man needs to be *needed*. Independence from the protection that godly authority offers had actually proved to be a barrier to the very relationship the women desired, marriage. The women had unconsciously been training themselves to need *no one*. Many of the women moved back home to come under protection once again. Not too long after this change in the group's outlook toward godly authority, a number of weddings took place!

Submission to authority, even to those as publicly identified with God as were Moses and Joshua, does not come readily. Rebellion and hostility always seem to be lurking under the surface, prepared to attack God's shepherds:

*Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites. . . became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" When Moses heard this, he fell facedown (Numbers 16:1-4).*

When those in authority come under attack, their only prerogative is to turn to God. He alone is the Vindicator.

Yet God's people are commanded to submit to all authority, not just to those who are godly or just. For example, "benevolent" would hardly describe the rule of first century Rome. Oppressive and tyrannical, the Roman authorities could, and often did, steal, maim, or kill for little reason. particularly from those perceived as enemies of the State. Those such as Jewish believers Aquila and Priscilla were ordered along with all Jews to leave Rome (see Acts 18:2). It was in this severe environment that Paul could still write to the believers in the heart of that Empire:

*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. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the **one in authority**? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is **God's servant** to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is **God's servant, an agent of wrath** to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to **submit to the authorities**, not only because of possible punishment but also because of **conscience**. This is also why you pay taxes, for the **authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing**" (Romans 13:1-6).*

These commands must have been particularly difficult for believers to comprehend, much less obey, given the subjugation and atrocities to which they were exposed. Yet Paul does not mince words. God's goal is much higher than fairness or personal comfort. By responding to injustice with loving trust in their Sovereign Lord, these early Christians were able to win over the hearts of many of their persecutors and expand the Kingdom of God in a way that zealous rebellion could never have done.

So needed was this reminder about the proper place of authority in God's order that Paul reiterates the same message to Titus on the isle of Crete: "*Remind the people to be **subject to rulers and authorities**, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good*" (Titus 3:1).

Think how countercultural that message was to people who had a reputation as “liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons”! (See Titus 1:12.) Yet only through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit can people’s character and nature be changed. Thankfully, our yieldedness to that Spirit is what He is really looking for!

Rejection and disdain of authority are counterproductive to God’s will. Refusal to submit to God-ordained authority stems from rebellious self-will that chooses to make and follow its own decisions. Peter goes to great length to list the dreadful consequences for those in antiquity who refused to submit to authority: chains of darkness in hell for the rebellious angels; the devastating flood that destroyed the ungodly of the earth; the fiery devastation of unrighteous Sodom and Gomorrah (see 2 Peter 2:4-6). These rebels chose to “*follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority*” (2 Peter 2:10).

We know from Scripture that Satan understands the concept of authority. In his dialogue with Jesus as they viewed all the kingdoms of the world, he could confidently say, “*I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to*” (Luke 4:5,6). Because of the usurped authority that Satan had exercised over the sinful kingdoms of the earth, he could offer these to Jesus in exchange for worship.

Thus we see the danger of abusing authority. Jesus identified a particular area of training that the disciples would need before receiving power from on high: *humility*, learning to be servant-leaders. He therefore reiterated the difference between His Father’s method of rule and the system of rule that Satan offers the world:

*Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Matthew 20:25-28).*

The pride that caused Satan to be thrown out of his heavenly home is exactly opposite to the humble service that our Father requires of His shepherds.

The commands for God’s people to “*clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience [and to] bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another*” are all the more mandatory for those who have authority in His Body (see Colossians 3:12,13). Paul emphasizes the value of following the example of godly men. Elders who are caring for the flock should zealously desire to draw close to their Father so that their pattern indeed mirrors His heart.

Jesus led through example, humbly washing His disciples’ feet. “Foot-washings” by today’s elders may vary according to the Spirit’s guidance. But there is one constant: Humility produces the leadership character needed for unity in the Body.

Because spiritual leaders are called to see themselves as servants, a sign of mutual submission to one another for the good of the flock will be *unanimity*. By looking to the interests of others more highly than to your own, humility can truly be a hallmark of your council of elders. Also, prayer and fasting can work wonders to bring about unity of heart and spirit.

The essence of leadership is having those who willingly follow. In our book *Restoring the Early Church* we mentioned two questions we’ve asked people within congregations and home fellowships:

- Name three people in your congregation to whom you would turn in time of deep trouble in your life.
- Name three people in your congregation with whom you would ask to do an activity.

When those who claim to be in authority barely show up in the responses, there is a grievous problem. A man cannot lead if there is no one following him. On the other hand, Paul commanded Titus to recognize by appointment the older men by whom the new Cretan converts were already looking to as leaders (see Titus 1:5).

## Authority: Responsibility to Correct and Admonish

Because authority can so often be abused or misunderstood, Paul offers this insight: *“For even if I boast somewhat freely about the **authority** the Lord gave us for **building you up** rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it”* (2 Corinthians 10:8). The authority which represents our Father is seen by the Christlike fruit it produces.

With the privilege of authority comes the responsibility to discipline. Discipline covers a range that extends in degree from instructing in the way of truth, to a mild chiding, to admonishment, to expulsion and excommunication. Discipline is part of our Father’s loving design for training His people. His love for those in His Kingdom is displayed in His discipline:

*Endure hardship as discipline; **God is treating you as sons**. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had **human fathers who disciplined us** and we **respected** them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good**, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been **trained by it** (Hebrews 12:7-11).*

The painful discipline that our Father knows we need helps us to better understand His love and sovereign authority over us. This concept flies in the face of current platitudes: “Love means high self-esteem,” and, “A loving God wants me to be happy.” The truly loving Father Whom the Bible depicts has ordained that the road to intimacy with Him means *self-denial*—trustingly picking up a cross of obedience each day to submit to *His* will, not our own. Yet mastering obedience comes by training that is repeated over and over in the classroom of submission to God-given authority. Jesus affirms the importance and goal of discipline: *“Those whom I love I **rebuke and discipline**. So be earnest, and **repent**”* (Revelation 3:19).

The first people to correct you are generally your parents. Part of the training process involves learning to respect their position of authority rather than giving in to rebellious self-will. Learning to bring joy to parents is valuable preparation for understanding the application of Hebrews 13:17, making it a joy for the elders who are over you in your faith community: *“The father of a **righteous man** has **great joy**; he who has a **wise son** **delights in him**”* (Proverbs 23:24).

Foolishness is hidden in the heart of all mankind. That is why the Bible so often repeats a parent’s responsibility: *“Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul”* (Proverbs 29:17). Discipline develops in a person’s life as he learns to conform his will to that of those in authority over him. When a willful spirit keeps the child from recognizing the importance of obedience, God’s Word again has an answer: *“The **rod of correction** imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother”* (Proverbs 29:15).

If parents continue to offer excuses for their child’s stubborn disobedience or blame parental weariness for their failure to correct their child(ren), destruction and pain are sure

to come: *“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death”* (Proverbs 19:18).

Consistent discipline of a child demands *self-discipline* on the part of the parent. Likewise, discipline development within the flock is a responsibility of elders: *“Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who are working hard among you, those who are **guiding you** in the Lord and **confronting you** in order to **help you change**. Treat them with the highest regard in love because of the work they are doing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13, JNT)<sup>1</sup>. Not only are elders responsible to serve diligently, but the spiritual family are commanded to respect and honor them for their service.

One point deserves special emphasis. Paul specifically instructs Titus to make sure that the elders he appoints *“hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that [they] can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it”* (Titus 1:9). Diligence in personal study and application of the Word is so vital. How else can these shepherds discern false doctrine and heresy, such as present-day gnosticism, Nicolaitanism, legalism, and antinomianism? By biblically confronting those in the flock who are not walking according to the true faith as outlined in the Scriptures, elders can admonish and exhort the errant ones to alter their course.

Those who receive biblical advice, counsel, or rebuke from their elders and mentors should render account by implementing what they have received. When brothers and sisters share with the fellowship what they have learned from applying the counsel they have received, the Body is edified and the elders are encouraged too!

*“For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life”* (Proverbs 6:23). Habitual failure to follow through is often indicative of a spirit of rebellion (remember Deuteronomy 21:18-21) or insubordination (see 1 Samuel 15:23). Recognizing wisdom, receiving it, and applying it are all vital steps in each person’s pilgrimage: *“He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise”* (Proverbs 15:31).

**Authority: God’s Means of Character Development**

Below you will find a comparison of biblical characteristics and natural human characteristics. The biblical characteristics that are listed may be viewed as facets of wisdom. The human characteristics may be summed up in the word “folly.” The contrast of wisdom and folly is enormous: *“I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness”* (Ecclesiastes 2:13). And people are born bent on foolishness: *“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him”* (Proverbs 22:15).

As you go down the list, circle the number that best represents your own development level. Ask one or two people who are close to you to review your list with you. Discuss ways in which you can develop some of the godly traits.

<u>Biblical Characteristics</u>	<	versus	>	<u>Human Characteristics</u>								
Open-handed	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Tight-fisted
Joyful	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Depressed
Yielding	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Defiant
Accessible	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Aloof
Zealous	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Lazy
Courageous	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Fearful
Forgiving	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Bitter
Caring	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Selfish
Honest	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Deceptive

Confident	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Worried
Longsuffering	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Irritable
Trusting	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Cynical
Chaste	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Sensual
Thankful	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Grumbling
Organized	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Sloppy
Merciful	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Indifferent
Fair	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Biased
Humble	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Proud
Gentle	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Harsh
Submissive	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Bossy
Vigilant	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Careless
Hospitable	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Isolated
Frugal	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Wasteful
Generous	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Greedy
Prompt	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0	Late

Your willingness to receive correction in characteristics that are lacking in godliness is a sign of wisdom. Paul reiterated the need for confrontation to Titus as one who was preparing elders for leadership responsibility: *“These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you”* (Titus 2:15).

The ability for *anyone* to receive correction becomes increasingly more difficult in a rebellious society that does not abide by the commands of God. As our society turns its back on the standards of the God of Israel, biblical wisdom is disappearing from the public venue: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline”* (Proverbs 1:7). No matter what society embraces, within the Church God has ordained corrective processes to restore reconciliation and order:

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction* (2 Timothy 3:16-4:2).

## Family Authority: Developed in the Home

In 1960 children had a 90% probability of living in a two-parent home. A child born in 1980, however, had less than a 30% chance of being raised by both birth parents. In a very short period of time something important has been lost. We've failed to show our children how to succeed us in marriage.

Two factors in particular have contributed to the demise of healthy marriages: the diminished exercise of godly authority in the home, and failure to realize God's purposes for marriage and child-rearing. Much of what has always been considered parental responsibility has become the domain of schools, including Sunday schools. A father's leadership—his God-given authority and accompanying responsibilities to his wife and children—have been drastically undermined. His jurisdiction has been taken from him.

The Hebraic Restoration returns God's people to the issues that made our spiritual father, Abraham, acceptable to God our Father. Abraham was a man surrounded by a culture as pagan as ours. Why did God choose this man in particular? Genesis 18:19 gives a

clue: “For I have chosen [Abraham], so that he will **direct his children** and his household after him to **keep the way of the Lord** by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

As we mentioned earlier, Abraham believed God which resulted in a trusting faith that God credited to him as righteousness. Your trust in Jesus results in the same credit to you as His follower. Abraham was a man who lived out God’s principles: He allowed Lot first choice of where he wanted to dwell (Genesis 13); he risked his own life to rescue Lot (Genesis 14:1-17); he gave a tenth of everything to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20); he refused the King of Sodom’s offer of goods in order to keep the pagan king from claiming credit for Abraham’s success (Genesis 14:22-24).

Abraham’s leadership qualities were based on a relationship with the Father that was so intense that it denied self-interest in order to uphold God’s principles. How blessed is the man who has learned self-sacrifice during his own upbringing or from other older men before he takes a wife. Marriage is the arena and *agape* love the motivator for Christ-like qualities to be matured. Slowly the Church is recognizing that most contemporary men are not prepared for the sacrifice that marriage entails. To meet this need, some faith communities are creating environments in which younger men can have meaningful access to older men, such as early morning accountability groups.

The manner in which you treat your wife and children suggests the level of caring leadership you have developed: “[An elder] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)” (1 Timothy 3:4,5).

In order to maintain order in the home as well as in the faith community, God has established certain principles of authority. He designed these to bring harmony to your marriage relationship and peace to your home. Just because His principles run counter to today’s platform of gender equality in no way nullifies the words of scripture: “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). Headship certainly does not erode dignity or worth—look at the example of the relationship between Jesus and His Father.

Some of the verses that pertain to a woman’s place under authority are difficult to understand, such as 1 Corinthians 11:10, which deals with the “sign of authority” on a woman’s head. However, anyone who submits to authority is submitting to the *position* ordained by God, not to the person *per se*. This makes submission to husbands, for instance, far easier for women who realize in their hearts that they are in this way observing the authority of the Lord that has been given to their mates: “Wives, submit to your husbands **as to the Lord**” (Ephesians 5:22), and, “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is **fitting in the Lord**” (Colossians 3:18).

During women’s retreats we would often ask wives about their feelings toward their husbands. One of the more frequent statements indicated, “I love the man, but I don’t like him.” As we probed, it became clear that many women had a difficult time respecting their husbands. They failed to see in their husbands the humility and concern for God’s principles required for family leadership.

Paul addresses the issue of respect: “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33). The command for a wife to respect her husband has too often been demanded unilaterally. Respect has to do with the *manner* in which a person leads; therefore it must be earned. Blessed is the wife whose husband is in relationship with older men who operate as fathers in his life, role-modeling and confronting him to enable him change. This man is developing into a hus-

band that she will find easy to respect! A man who lacks the wise counsel and advice of older men will thrust upon his wife the difficult burden of trying to respect a foolish husband. Remember, those in authority should also make it a joy for those in their care to mature with them!

1. *Jewish New Testament* by Dr. David H. Stern, p. 277.