

# Authority - Spiritual Leadership

*Lorne Sanny*

## Introduction

A. Once I was wondering if I should keep working with Dawson Trotman because I thought he was too hard on me.

1. God used the stories about Joshua to encourage me.
2. Be strong and courageous. (Joshua 1:7)

B. Today we will talk about spiritual leadership.

1. After studying the topic I want to apply this to The Navigators.
2. First I want to examine all Scripture on the subject.
3. Second I need time to think things through.
4. Then let's make application.

## I. Spiritual leadership.

A. Our central problem is self-assertiveness in wanting to be God and this spills out into relationships.

1. Our first lesson is one of surrender and submission.
2. In the exercise of authority we emphasize the redemptive aspect.

B. Review.

1. Spiritual leaders are Jesus, apostles, elders, deacons, and others of various kinds.
2. Jesus' authority came from God.
3. The apostles' authority came from Jesus. (Matthew 23:8)
4. Jesus gave them authority over demons but not over each other. (Matthew 10:1)
5. Jesus gave them authority of binding and loosing. (Matthew 16 and 18)
  - a. This is the right to say what is right in the kingdom. (Acts 15)
  - b. This is the right to say what is wrong in the kingdom.
6. The mother of the sons of Zebedee asked for special authority in the kingdom, which made the others indignant. (Matthew 20:20-28)

- a. Jesus said they should not lord it over each other.
- b. At the last supper they had another argument over who was the greatest.
- c. None are to be called rabbi because they all have one teacher or master and the greatest one is the servant. (Matthew 23:8-11)

7. Elders also have authority. (1 Peter 5:1-6)

8. There are other spiritual leaders in Scripture.

- a. Those who have devoted themselves to the service of the saints are leaders. (1 Corinthians 16:15-16)
- b. Those who labor among you and admonish you are leaders. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
- c. Those who speak the word of life and watch over the souls of the saints are leaders. (Hebrews 13:7-17)

9. Some characteristics of leaders are as follows.

- a. Fidelity to Scripture (1 Timothy 3)
- b. Openness to what the Scriptures teach. (Acts 17:11)

C. Two critical observations about spiritual leaders.

1. The Spiritual leader is under authority of Christ. (Matthew 23:8)

- a. God has only one missionary and we are his workmen. (2 Corinthians 5)
- b. The spiritual leader is under the authority of the word of God. (Luke 24)
  - 1. Experience is not enough if it is not grounded in the word. (Acts 26)
  - 2. The authority of the preacher lies in an accurate interpretation of the Word.
- c. Spiritual leaders are under the authority of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 15)
  - 1. The Holy Spirit directed the movement of the apostles.
  - 2. The authority of the church is subject to the Holy Spirit.

2. Spiritual leadership is exercised through function not position. (Matthew 20:25-28)

- a. There is one teacher and father in heaven. (Matthew 23:8-12)
- b. Function takes precedence over position yet we often feel we cannot function without a position.

- c. Without my position I could still function.
- d. I need to get my concept right because my life is wrapped up in function not position.
- e. We call one man director of evangelism for others to understand something about his function, but not to eliminate others from that function.
- f. The function of hearing is more important than for the organ to be called an ear.
- g. The function of equipping and serving the body is more important than calling someone after a particular office.
- h. The position only helps us identify who we are talking about.
- i. The function is to serve the body. (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; 2 Corinthians 10:8)

D. Spiritual leadership is influence, and it is not synonymous with authority.

- 1. Leadership is influencing the actions and attitudes of others.
- 2. Our nature is to not be satisfied with influence so if we can't get people to go along with us we tend to try to force them.
- 3. Spiritual leadership influences people toward the things of the Spirit.
  - a. Faith.
  - b. Love.
  - c. Knowing Christ and making Him known.

E. The dynamics of Spiritual leadership are varied.

- 1. Prayer is a spiritual influence that makes a difference.
  - a. Hudson Taylor talks about his prayer life as a means of influencing others.
  - b. A friend told me how his life had been transformed by praying each morning for over one hour.
  - c. The apostles gave themselves to prayer and the word.
- 2. Example is a spiritual influence. (1 Peter 5:3)
  - a. Timothy was to be an example to the believers. (1 Timothy 4:12)
  - b. Our works are all to shine before men that God may be glorified. (Matthew 5:16)

3. Service, sacrifice, and suffering are spiritual influences. (Matthew 20:20-28)

a. Jesus said those who serve will also suffer.

b. Whoever is first must be a slave of all.

c. There is a cross at the heart of all spiritual leadership and that's why there's always room at the top because not all are willing to suffer.

4. Teaching is a spiritual influence. (Luke 12:13-21)

a. Jesus refused to be a judge over one who looked for justice with respect to his inheritance.

b. Jesus also warned that it is foolish to lay up treasure on earth and to be thoughtless with respect to treasures in heaven.

c. Instead of taking the role of judge Jesus taught the man about riches.

II. Authority has to do with word, the Spirit, and the conscience.

A. Spiritual authority is exercised by confronting the conscience of a person.

1. We confront with the word of God.

2. We confront in the power of the Spirit, commending ourselves. (2 Corinthians 4:2;

3. The spiritual ones restore the sinners. (Galatians 6:1)

4. Leaders are told to preach the word of God. (2 Timothy 4:2)

5. If people don't respond we don't use force but go somewhere else.

a. We address the conscience even if it is dull.

b. James and John once wanted to pray fire from heaven on those who refused to respond, but Jesus rebuked them as he came to save.

c. There is a legitimate use of coercion in spiritual leadership.

1. Fathers can use force in the family.

2. Government can use force to enforce the law.

3. Spiritual leaders use force by withdrawing fellowship (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Romans 16:17)

4. Withdrawing fellowship is a powerful use of coercion, so we need to exercise this right carefully.

B. Summary.

1. We all have spiritual leaders.
2. A good summary of spiritual leadership is found in one verse of Scripture.
  - a. We preach not ourselves but Christ as Lord. (2 Corinthians 4:5)
  - b. We need to get off the throne and let Jesus have his rightful place.