

Now You've Crossed the Line

When I say the word authority, what comes to mind?

Many of us have very emotional reactions to authority.

- A teacher, a pastor, a government official? Flashing red and blue lights.
- Some of us were abused by an authority figure.
- Some of us have had very positive experiences: we see the stability that a protective father or healthy church leader brings to the family and community.

Part of what it means to be a family is, sometimes you have to have hard conversations. And Mom, Dad and the kids don't always agree, but we're still family. Today I want to have a family conversation about our complicated relationship with authority.

So we're going to touch on self-government all the way down to political government. I want you to hear my heart:

If we have a problem with the idea of authority then we have a problem with the idea of God. God is the ultimate authority. And he delegates authority. When Jesus comes back, he's coming back to reign. We literally pray for God's government to come.

Slide:

We all have rebellion in our hearts. We all have a bit of THIS inside of us.



Ill: Kris walking in on Elliott painting the walls with sunscreen.

When authority is humble, loving, wise, and submitted to God, authority is a good thing.

You don't want to live in a world where people are ruthless and submit to nothing, where evil and chaos can do whatever it wants. Where there are no boundaries and no protectors. That's chaos, that's anarchy. Healthy authority is designed to protect us against evil.

God possesses all authority.

[Matthew 28:18](#)

Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Jesus already possesses all of the rights to rule over anyone and anything. He can step back in when he’s good and ready.

God is the source of all authority! If that’s not your starting point, then anything is possible. But if that is your starting point, then everything has to snap back to God’s law, like a magnet.

Psalm 89:14

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

All authority is used to further love and truth.

God delegates different kinds of authority to mankind!

Slide: Shane created – slide 1

1. Self-government

- **Romans 14:12**

“Each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.”

- God delegates the power and responsibility to govern ourselves.
- No one else can make me mad or steal my peace. I choose how I act.
- It’s my responsibility to take care of myself, to not abuse others, and to make wise choices.
- I have to power to submit to God first, or follow my own law.
- God warned us, the natural consequence of stepping out from under his authority and life source – you will surely die.
- What are the consequences of living in a generation that says there is no truth? I can create my own truth?
- When things don’t go well for us, we want to blame everyone else: the people with power, it was my church, this person didn’t give me this. Or they did this to me.
- “Am I taking responsibility for myself?” Am I doing all that I can!

Slide: Shane created – slide 2

2. Family government – Ephesians 5:21-6:4

- **Deuteronomy 6:6**

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children.

- The Family unit is the foundation of the kingdom. God sets children into families.
- The role of the Father and the Mother is to raise their children in the affection and correction of the Lord. Love & Truth are the government of the home.
- **Proverbs 22:6**

Train the child in the way they should go and when they are old they will not depart.

- The parent doesn't use authority to crush the child into conformity.
- The harder work of the parent is to raise the child to love the good and hate the evil.
- "How am I leading my family spiritually?" Are we training them to conform to rules? Or are we training them to think for themselves, to be fully mature adult who loves the good and hates the evil, long after someone is standing over them with a punishment.

Slide: Shane created – slide 3

3. **Church government.** – 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:1-6:4

- **Matthew 16:19**

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

- Church has a different authority than families and government. It's a spiritual authority.
- The church is called to make disciples: help people be fully conformed to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- The church has to be careful not to lust after the coercive power of politics.
- We are called to the harder work of transforming society, transforming passions, and shaping how people think. That's the art of persuasion, not politics.

4. **Vocational government.** – **Ephesians 6:5-9** treating employees the way you'd like to be treated.

Slide: Shane created – slide 4

Jesus affirmed political governors. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's."

5. **Political Government – Romans 13:1-13**

Romans 13:1-10 (New American Standard Bible)

Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, (God institutes the idea of authority) and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance (arrangement) of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same (you'll be praised for being a law-abiding citizen); ⁴for it (the authority) is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; respect to whom respect; honor to whom honor.

[Live in love. There are no laws prohibiting love.]

⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (don't wrong your brother); for the one who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the Law*. (if we lived in love, we would have no need for the law) ⁹For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the Law*.

- If we lived in love, we would have no need for the law or authority.
- Slide: "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." James Madison
- Government is necessary because we do evil to each other, so it becomes the restraining hand, a force of last resort to protect people against evil.
- The governing authority is a servant of God who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. V.4
- Slide: "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom...as nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters...freedom requires virtue." ~Benjamin Franklin.

Slide: Shane created – slide 5

In a healthy society, political government is at the bottom. In unhealthy societies, political government gets flipped to the top. For different reasons: fear, necessity, control, power. And the government begins to say, "I need this power to maintain control. This is for everyone's best interest." The state begins to use its authority to enforce its value system. What is the value system of a nation that has thrown God out? This can come from the right or the left. Can be the dictator on the right or the mob on the left. It uses its financial and political power to impose its value system down onto the private sector.

You know what we used to call that? Tyranny.

With my time remaining I want to give us 4 principles for healthy authority; to help you avoid becoming an abusive leader in your home or in society. And to help you know how to respond to abusive leadership.

4 Principles for Healthy Authority

1. Submit yourself to God's truth and love—[that is God's law].

- authority is to be a servant of God for good. V.4
- **Love is the highest law.** There is no law that restrains love.
- All authority (family, church, govt) is to be used to serve the good of the people.
- Any authority that doesn't remain under God's truth and love is an abuse of the people
- I can't use the position of power to do anything I want, or to benefit myself.
- I become a parasite that feeds on the people that I'm supposed to serve. Church or Gov.
- Healthy leaders feel the weight of responsibility to submit to God's authority first, serve the people, and not serve self-benefiting agendas, or single party politics.
- You can usually spot unhealthy leaders because they don't sacrifice for the people unless they have the power.

2. Embrace accountability and transparency!

Those who possess a position of authority are accountable to abide by the same laws they enforce.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20

“When (the king) takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law...it is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law...and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law...”

- Power is not a rubber stamp to do whatever I want. No one is above the law.
- Both righteous King David, and evil King Ahab were confronted by the prophets for their actions.
- Who are you accountable to? Who reads your emails and looks at your web searches? Who asks you the hard questions about what’s in your heart?
- Petra is under authority.
- We need the uncomfortable voices that check our powers in personal life, in family, in church, in government and society.
- One of the greatest symptoms of evil right now is the prejudicial suppression of free speech. It’s evil.
- It keeps everyone safer to have people looking over the shoulders of ushers and citizens, over vote counters.
- True authority always loves the truth, and serves the truth, because the Truth will always set you free.
- “If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and the next place, oblige it to control itself.” James Madison

We mentioned that God delegates different kinds of authority.

3. Respect the limits of your authority

- You are not God. Respect the boundaries God gave you.
- If you feel the need to pressure and coerce people into doing what you want them to do, you’re standing on the edge of abuse.
- We live in the humility that I don’t have to govern you, or your thoughts, or your actions. I don’t have to police you.
- The church doesn’t have to control its people. And the state doesn’t need to control its people either.
- God is the only perfect power. Human authority is imperfect and corrupt and that’s why no one should have total power. Total power says “I am God.” You do nothing without my permission.
- Whatever authority he has entrusted you with, you are always under his authority.

4. Bring correction to control and abuse

- Nowhere in this passage is Paul teaching them to remain under abusive leadership.
- A physically abusive parent. Manipulative church leadership. Coercive governments, are all distortions of God's justice and abuse of authority
- We aren't called to blindly follow the illegitimate use of authority.
- When David sins and kills Uriah. Point out his sins.
- When Nebuchadnezzar says bow down to my statue. Don't bow down!
- It requires wisdom to know how to respond.
- We really have to be in tune with God's Word and God's Spirit to respond appropriately to different situations.

Summary:

As I mentioned earlier in a family conversation Mom, Dad, & the kids don't all agree on every detail. That's ok. This is what we want to be agreed on.

- We want to be a people submitted to God's leadership.
- Who operate transparently and accountably with the responsibility we've been given.
- God wants to use healthy men and women in leadership to rule lovingly and wisely over the earth.
- We want to strive to be humble and sacrificial and respect our limitations.
- We want to be leaders who love the people we serve. Love is the highest law.