

Authority #1

Note: These articles relate to "authority" in general, but I want us to specifically think about the elders God has ordained as we study them.

INTRODUCTION:

Vance Havner: *"Our world is fast becoming a mad-house, and the inmates are trying to run the asylum. It is a strange time when the patients are writing the prescriptions, the students are threatening to run the schools, the children to manage the homes, and church members -- not the Holy Spirit -- to direct the churches."*

- We live in a day and age when everyone is an authority on everything – yet no one acknowledges the authority of anyone else.
- Patients are experts on doctoring / students are experts on teaching / parents are experts on teaching / teachers are experts on administration / children are experts on parenting / citizens are experts on governing / civilians are experts on warfare / spectators are experts on coaching a sports team / church members are experts on church leadership and preaching / workers are experts on corporate management / and every human being is an expert on morality and religion.
- We live in an age where everyone assumes they know better than the people in authority over them and feel free to criticize what they don't really understand.

Remember the slogan from the 1960s and 70s? -- *"Question Authority."*

- Well, with 30+ years of practice, Americans have become pretty good at questioning – and criticizing – and resisting – and disrespecting – and dismissing – authority.
- Many parents are very good at questioning and criticizing and disrespecting other authorities in their lives – and then wonder why their children don't respect their parental authority.
- Actually, as it has been said: *"There is just as much authority in the family today as there ever was -- only now the children exercise it."*
- The Duke of Windsor was asked what impressed him most about America. He said, *"The thing that impresses me most about America is the way parents obey their children."*

We Americans cherish our individuality and our equality.

- The Declaration of Independence declares: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights ... that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ... That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from*

the consent of the governed..."

- That last phrase is an American democratic ideal – but it is not necessarily a biblical teaching.
- For the Bible teaches that governments derive their just powers not from the consent of the governed but from the sovereign authority of God -- Romans 13:1.
- Everyone must submit himself/herself 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.

Just as God establishes government authority as an extension of His own sovereign authority – so also God establishes parental authority as an extension of His own.

- The family is not a democracy whereby children vote for the one they want to be in charge.
- And Parents do not derive their authority from the consent of their children – but from God.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S CHAIN OF AUTHORITY.

- The first four of the 10 Commandments deal with the issue of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.
- The next 6 commandments deal with the issue of loving one's neighbor as oneself.
- The 5th commandment occupies a strategic place as the bridge between these two sets.
God's moral instruction concerning human relationships begins with the command to honor your father and your mother -- why?
- It makes sense that the first commandment governing human relationships would focus on the family since the family is the most basic unit of all human relationships and society.
- But why not a command focusing on marriage?
- And why focus on the obligation to honor father and mother – rather than on the obligation of father and mother to love and teach and discipline their children?
Why are the four commandments dealing with our love relationship with God followed next by the commandment to honor father and mother?

- Well, for one thing, everyone has a father and mother, but not everyone has a spouse or children --but I believe there is a more basic reason than that.

- We acknowledge the sovereignty of the one true God by accepting the authorities He has placed over us – beginning with our parents.

- The human relationship that is the closest parallel to our love relationship with God is the relationship between a father or mother and a child.

-- Israel was called God's son in the OT.

-- And in the NT believers in Jesus Christ are called sons of God and children of God.

- We are invited to draw near to God in an intimate, tender, loving relationship – the way a child draws near to a loving parent.

- But no matter how loving the relationship between a parent and a child – they are NOT peers – the parent is in a position of authority // and the child is in a position of submission to that authority.

- That is basic to family structure – and it is basic to our relationship with God.

The command – and the invitation – to enter into a love relationship with God – does not nullify the reality that our first and most basic response to the Lord God Almighty is to fear Him and to keep His commandments.

- We learn to do that by honoring and obeying our father and our mother.

- Basic to abiding in a love relationship with God is living under God's absolute authority – and under all other authority that God has set over us.

- As an expression of His love / care / guidance / provision / and protection – God establishes earthly authorities over us.

- We submit to the authority of God our heavenly Father -- and position ourselves to experience His guidance, provision and protection -- by submitting to the earthly authorities of government, work, home and church.

- Adrian Rogers: *"We can never exercise authority OVER those things God has put UNDER us until we are UNDER those things that He has set OVER us."*

God gives Kingdom Authority to His children who have a spirit of submission.

- Do you want power to live a godly life // to overcome sin // to defeat the enemies of your soul // to win spiritual victories // to bear much fruit // to develop and use your spiritual gifts // to grow in spiritual understanding // to know and do God's will // to be effective in Christ's service?
- Then you need to learn to live under the authority that God has set over you.
- If you want the full benefits of living under the umbrella of God's blessing, power, guidance, provision and protection – then you need to remain under the umbrella of authority that God has set over you.
- When you remove yourself from authority God has placed over you – you also remove yourself from His umbrella of spiritual protection. It doesn't even matter whether the person in authority over you is a godly or ungodly person.
- Your submission to that authority keeps you under God's umbrella of protection – and your rejection or rebellion against that authority removes you from that umbrella of protection.
- Your spiritual protection is determined more by the way you honor those in authority over you than by the way they behave.
- A man who clearly understood this concept of authority and protection was David.
- In the second article we will look at an event in the life of David that shows this is true.