

Of Authority, Leadership, And The PC Police

A sermon series by Pr. David Johnson (Week 6)

We've covered a lot of Biblical territory in the last month and a half. We have seen how God set the ideal of authority and leadership in Himself, the Triune Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; three unique persons in complete unity without competition or usurping power.

This ideal was displayed in the creation of man and woman; both image-bearers of God, with unique and special roles. The man was the head and carrier of God's vision, while the woman was to be man's support and helpmeet, both worked side by side fulfilling God's purposes.

But then the fall brought everything crashing down in Genesis 3. The serpent entered the scene, challenging the woman to usurp her husband, to rebel against God, and to pursue her own path of self-actualization. And though Satan's challenge was directed at God Himself, the woman played into his hand, leading the man in the same direction of disobedience. Adam disobeyed God and pursued independence. Sin would now taint all that God had created; especially God's relationship with mankind, and man's relationship with the woman.

From this point on, man would forever be trying to be the leader, when in actuality, he was simply following from out front. Like a dog I once had:

We had a golden lab/golden retriever when I was a kid. When we'd go for walks, she would always run out in front of me, then proudly walk along with her head high and her tail wagging. Undoubtedly she believed herself to be the leader. However, she would constantly keep looking back to check which way I was going. Although the dog's behavior had appearances of leadership, the fact was, she was following from the front! Something inside that dog knew the ideal, but struggled against it.

Likewise, though man's fall into sin compromised God's creation, it couldn't contaminate His ideal. And this model is applied throughout Scripture, eventually leading to where we are today, leadership in the church.

Every believer is called to be a leader in the direction of heaven. Through our daily example, we encourage others to follow along with us; neither in domination nor submitting to popular opinion. I've heard it said, "A good leader not only knows the way, but shows the way!" Similarly, I have another plaque in my office that shows a cowboy riding ahead of his cattle. The caption underneath says, "When you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there."

It's interesting how often the issue of leadership impacts the average congregation, but how rarely it's ever discussed or confronted. We've gotten so used to our

secularized, business or social paradigms that we have no clue what the Biblical system even looks like. Several years ago, a church magazine shared this article:

"When we had Luther League...we used to have the youth elect a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and a devotional life secretary. We did this in order to teach youths how a congregation is to operate and conduct business. Some congregations even had a youth elected to meet with the church council and to be involved in other boards and committees. ... The districts had leadership training schools where the students learned what their position was all about. We even had leadership schools for the presidents where they learned how to carry out what they were elected to do."

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying all of what you just read is *anti-Christian*. Those ideas would be fantastic if you were training the next generation of CEO's or social organizers. But it has little in common with God's biblical design for His Body. I mean, our Heavenly Father is a God of order and process, yes; but presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries aren't sacred positions, and not consecrated; you won't find them in the Bible.

Likewise, I am not saying that there aren't things in the secular world, business or otherwise, which we may find useful. Neither am I saying that choosing to borrow from a business paradigm is sinful (*Roberts Rules of Order, for example*). However, we must remember that those systems are not equal to the clear instructions of God's Word. Because of this, we must be careful to keep separate the principles of Scripture and the opinions of man. But sadly, like my old dog, much of the church today has been too quick to hypocritically follow the world from its "self-righteous place out front."

Magnify all of this with centuries of Papal edicts, indoctrination, reformation, and adaptation, and you're left with a system that has bred endless amounts of confusion, homogenization, and even abuse. So in a desire to bring clarity and uniformity to what can be a bewildering environment, I would like to go back to what God actually instructed in the pages of His word.

It all began with a Theocracy

From the early pages of the Old Testament, God had initiated a system by which prophets and judges would be established by the Lord Himself. They would, in turn, carry out His instructions throughout the land of Israel, and would do so until the day of their death. It was a system where God was the clear authority, the prophets and judges were his voice, and the people were led by the perfect will of God (*as long as the human vessels remained true*). But even these human servant-leaders sometimes had help. (*Jethro explains Moses' team of judges in Ex. 18:18ff*)

The people abandon their God

The people of Israel tire of taking orders from these voice-pieces of God and demand to be like the nations around them (*along with the fact that the last couple judges*

hadn't done too well raising the next generation of judges). They cry out to Samuel to give them a king like everyone else, regardless of the consequences God warns will come with this choice. (*1 Sam 8:4-7ff*)

The King verses the Priests

Once the king was established as supreme human authority, society began to move towards what some have called a "two kingdoms" understanding of authority. From this perspective, the King would rule the State, and the Priest would rule the Church.

* The government handles societal concerns (*Justice*-punishing evil-doers, *Army*-protecting the populace, and *Po-lice/laws*-maintaining an ordered community).

* The church handles areas of Religion, character, and faith.

The New Testament would seem to approve of this system, if it weren't for the frequency in which the state influences the church, rather than the other way around. The New Testament's design was that people would obey the governing authorities, but that the Church (*citizens of God's kingdom*) would bring their biblical foundations into the public arena. Silence of conviction was *NEVER* part of God's ideal for believers in the marketplace.

Romans 13:1-7 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For 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; ⁴ for it is a minister 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 minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

1 Peter 2:13-17 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. ¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Titus 3:1-2 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, ² to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Hebrews 11:13-16 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. ¹⁵ And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

Luke 17:20-21 "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Matthew 22:21 Then He *said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

So, though we may have a responsibility to abide by the laws of the land, and its leadership; believers are not to do it blindly. We are to bring our Biblical convictions into each legal position or cultural situation. Christian's are called to impact the world, not vice versa. And this principle is to be applied especially to leadership, and leadership structures in the church.