

deity and walked in obedience. Obedience and spiritual authority are inseparably linked. They cannot be separated.

In John 17:4 Jesus speaks of His Father, saying, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work Thou hast given Me to do."

What did Jesus accomplish when He was on the face of the earth? What did He do? He did the Father's will. Authority always goes hand in hand with obedience.

Jesus said, "For whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." (John 5:19) Can it be said that you do the things you see the Father do? That you speak the words you hear the Father speak? This is the pathway to spiritual authority. God will always anoint a life of obedience. He will always anoint a person who is seeking His face – and hearing and doing His word. It's not always what we see on the outside of a person that God honors – rather, it's what He sees on the inside.

For example, let me tell you the circumstances surrounding one of the most famous sermons ever preached – apart from the sermons in the Bible. This sermon is called *Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God*. It was preached by Jonathan Edwards in the 1700s. There are written accounts describing the very day Jonathan Edwards delivered his now famous message. Do you know how he delivered it?

Jonathan Edwards was not a great preacher. In fact, he was not an eloquent speaker at all. The accounts say that he held his notes up close to his face (because he had very poor eyesight) and read them instead of preaching them! He simply read the words of the sermon he had written. Doesn't sound like a very powerful delivery – does it?

But the Spirit of God fell on that place! It was so strong that the congregation grabbed the posts and pillars in that room and clung to them because they felt like they were falling into hell itself! They started screaming and crying because they said they could literally feel the flames of hell against the bottom of their feet! Believe me, eloquent delivery doesn't give you that kind of anointing! That sermon came forth with such power because it came from a man who walked in the spiritual authority of God.

Some people think if you speak loudly you have greater authority. But sometimes people speak more loudly because they have *little* authority! Volume does not mean authority. Eloquence does not mean authority. Authority comes through a godly life – obediently doing the next thing the Lord directs you to do.

What's Your Authority Level?

Few attain to the level of spiritual authority God wants us to have because we settle for giftings. We settle for flair. We settle for style. My friends, do you want to settle for good... or do you want God's best in your life?

God has used, and will use, the little things of this world to confound the wise. Are you one of those little things?

Is this your prayer? **Dear Lord, give me spiritual authority and the ability to touch people's lives though no one on the face of the earth ever recognizes it!** If this isn't your prayer, it should be. We need to be so in love with Jesus that we'll do whatever He tells us to do. We must be in a place of absolute humility and absolute obedience so that God can anoint and bless our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 20:20-23 we can read Jesus' own words concerning God-given authority:

"Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?'"

She said to Him, 'Command that in Your Kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?'"

They said to Him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.'"

The two sons of Zebedee were asking the Lord Jesus for positional authority, because the most powerful people in a kingdom are always the two people who sit on the right and left hand of the king. Yet even the Lord Jesus Himself could not grant these two men the positions of authority they desired. Why? Because, as Jesus clearly stated in Matthew 20:23, "This is not Mine to give...."

In the world's system, rulers can achieve positions of authority through their own power or ability, and can even force their authority on the people they lead. But in the Kingdom of God it's not that way. Spiritual authority doesn't come through power or might. True authority comes through humility and serving.

The young person that came to me that day wasn't really saying I'd held him back. He was actually saying that I had not granted him a *position* in our ministry. That's what he was really saying. But that's not for me to give! It's only my place to **recognize** what God has already given to a person!

Do you know what I look for in a person that I'm going to put in a leadership position? I look for a spirit of humility and a servant's heart – as well as the gifts they need to be a leader. There was one time I picked **my man** for a position of authority, and it was a huge mistake. That situation taught me to let God do the picking.

What's your level of spiritual authority? Whatever it is, I believe God wants to increase it. He wants to make you powerful in prayer and powerful in ministry. As we saw with Joseph, there are no shortcuts.

The only way to have spiritual authority is through a godly life.

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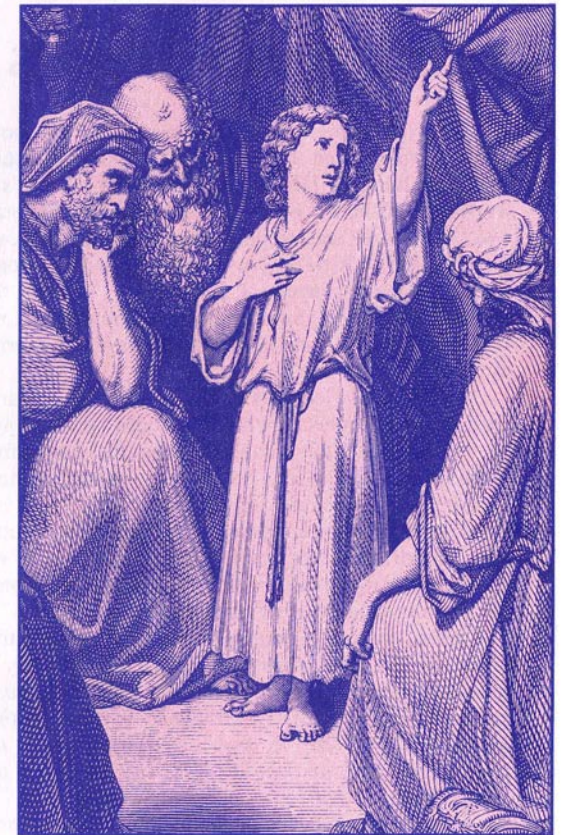
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SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

How Do You Know If You Have It?



by Wick Nease

Are you impressed with spiritual giftings? If someone sings like an angel, do you say, "Wow! What a wonderful ministry!" If you hear a gifted speaker weaving words with brilliant eloquence, do you think, "What a powerful minister of the Gospel!" It's a wonderful thing... the gifting of God. But spiritual authority is not just gifting!

Spiritual authority is the gifting of God combined with a godly character, and it only comes from a life lived in obedience to the Lord. It comes from a life-style of prayer and humility. When you have a gifting from the Lord and a godly character, God is free to pour His authority into your life.

One of the primary things that characterizes a man or woman with spiritual authority is a life-style of prayer. In Mark 9:29, Jesus forms an inseparable link between prayer and spiritual authority. After the disciples failed to cast demons out of a young boy, Jesus said, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

Saying Your Prayers

Are your prayers just good words, or are your prayers empowered by the Spirit of God because you're walking in His spiritual authority? There's a world of difference between the two. We can pray good prayers, or we can pray prayers that are empowered by God. Which do you want in your life? Don't settle for good prayers. I believe it's settling for second best. When you pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, do heaven... and hell... recognize the authority of God upon your life?

The Word of God says that what we bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, but that doesn't happen just by "saying the right thing." Having the right "formula" in our words does not give us spiritual authority. There is a teaching around that claims if we say the right words, we are going to get the right results. This is ridiculous! It's not just the words that we speak – it's the power behind the words that only comes from God granting us authority!

One of the best examples we have of people trying to use the right words without God's authority is found in Acts 19:11-16: "And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out."

You want to talk about authority? That's authority! Paul's authority was appealing to the seven sons of a certain Jewish chief priest. They decided to copy Paul.

These "Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, 'I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.'" (Acts 19:13)

As these young men watched Paul pray for the sick, they'd seen great miracles. People were being healed and evil spirits were driven out. They watched and watched... until they thought they figured out how to do it themselves. Then they said, "Hey, we've got it! We know how it's done!" It seemed simple – all they had to do was use the name of the Lord Jesus.

So they used all the right words... with disastrous results! "And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?'" (Acts 19:15)

You see, they had the "formula"... but they lacked spiritual authority in their lives! They were not acting in obedience to the call of God or the word of the Lord in their lives.

Since they were not living for the Lord, they did not have godly characters. God's authority could not flow through any of them. In fact, their misuse of the name of Jesus backfired. The man they were praying for jumped on them, overpowered them, and ripped off their clothes, "... so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." (Acts 19:16)

And the ultimate humiliation was that everyone heard about the incident. "And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified." (Acts 19:17)

We often quote that verse in Matthew 16:19, "...whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven..." We verbally try to bind evil and the devil wants to know, "But who on earth are you?!"

Having spiritual authority is more than just knowing the right words to say or having gifts. Some people have received wonderful gifts from the Lord, gifts of healing or prophesy, and then sometime later started living in gross sin. They may still be able to exercise the gifts the Lord gave them, but any authority they may have had is gone. Authority comes from a life of obedience to God. Spiritual authority comes when our lives contain the unbeatable combination of seeking His face, living in humility, and developing a godly character. It's only then that we'll see the power and authority of God released in and through our lives!

Spiritual authority.

Jesus has it. The disciples had it. Do you have it in your life? I believe God wants to release it to you.

In Matthew 7:29 we see that the Lord Jesus "...was teaching them as one having AUTHORITY, and not as their scribes."

The multitudes sat under the ministry of Jesus and they were amazed. What amazed them? What grabbed their attention? There probably wasn't much difference in the detail of what Jesus said compared to the detail of what the scribes had said. The teachings of Jesus probably weren't significantly different in content. The difference was that Jesus



taught them as one having authority. The multitudes recognized the authority of God in the life of this man.

Jesus not only taught with authority, He lived in the authority He had been given by the Father. God wants to release His authority in your life so that when you speak, pray, or preach, it's with His authority.

Promotion Comes From God

Spiritual authority is not found in a title. People (like the scribes) can have all kinds of titles, and not have God's authority in their lives. If you have authority, everyone will recognize it. It won't be something you have to talk about.

Once I had a young person come to me and say, "Wick, you're holding me back in ministry." Well, I didn't think it was true, but I went to God in prayer because it was a serious

accusation, and it really disturbed me. So I said, "God, is it true that I have held this young person back?"

And I felt the Lord was saying to me, "You haven't held him back... I have!" The Bible speaks very clearly on the subject of promotion: "For not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert comes exaltation; but God is the judge; He puts down one, and exalts another." (Psalm 75:6-7)

Exaltation doesn't come from man – it comes from God! The releasing of authority by man should simply be a recognition of the spiritual authority that already exists in that person's life! If you are walking in God's spiritual authority, no one on the face of the earth can hold back the releases of God in your life.

No man, no woman, no demon in hell can stop the hand of God from anointing your life. They may temporarily sidetrack it, but they cannot stop the blessing of God. And if you are walking in the place of spiritual authority in your personal life... God will put you in the position of public authority you need to be in.

The life of Joseph is an incredible story that deals with just that subject. Joseph experienced an incredible release of God's authority even though he was sold into slavery, lied about, and thrown into prison unjustly. None of those things could stop the releases of God as he walked in obedience and humility before the Lord. And the same will be true for you.

But you must allow the Lord to put you in a place that compares to your level of maturity and understanding. Don't push for a position which you know is beyond your level of spiritual authority. It will be a disaster for you – and for those you lead. Remember, as Joseph walked through trials with the right attitude, these trials were the very things that helped prepare him for the high level of authority God wanted to release to him.

Jesus Is Our Example

In the life of Jesus, spiritual authority came through obedience, not just gifting. Jesus had authority not just because He was the Son of God, but because as the Son of God He laid down His