



AIMCHURCH.ONLINE with Dr. Andries and Liz van Schalkwyk

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Understanding Spiritual Authority - By Dr. Andries van Schalkwyk

Bachelor of Theology, Master's Prophetic, Doctorate in Ministry, Ph.D. in Divinity, Certified Professional Coach, Certified Life Coach - Over 40 years of ministry experience **to serve and care for people.**

Understanding Spiritual Authority

Understanding **spiritual authority** is very important when discipling someone, because authority is part of how God establishes **order, protection, and spiritual growth** in a believer's life.

All authority comes from God - Rom 13:1 - *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*

God is a God of **order, not chaos**. From creation to the church, God establishes **authority structures** to guide, protect, and bless His people.

Spiritual authority is not about control.
It is about **divine alignment with God's order**.

Think about driving a vehicle. The driver is expected to respect their license by following the rules of the road. When traffic lights turn red, the driver must stop. If not, that would be considered reckless driving and could lead to a serious accident.

Likewise, Jesus Christ is our entrance ticket to heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." No one comes to the Father except through Me.

What Is Spiritual Authority?

Spiritual authority means God designates certain people or structures the responsibility to guide, protect, and lead others spiritually in accordance with His Word.

- Authority is not about control or domination.
- It is about **God's order for spiritual health and protection**.

A simple way to explain it:

Spiritual authority is God's system of covering, guidance, and accountability that enables believers to grow safely and remain aligned with His will.

Jesus Himself operated under authority.

- He submitted to the Father.
- He respected the authority structures of His day when they did not violate God's will.

Question - Who Represents Spiritual Authority?

Spiritual authority comes from **three primary sources**:

1. God's Word (The Bible)

The supreme, ultimate **authority** for every Christian.

Example:

The Bereans tested the teaching by Scripture. - Every believer needs to search out Scriptures in the Bible.

Example reference: Acts of the Apostles 17:11 - The Bible is the **final authority**.

2. Delegated Spiritual Leaders

God appoints leaders to guide and shepherd believers. Moses was the leader of Israel under God's instruction. King Saul became the leader of Israel. David then became the next leader of Israel, with other leaders underneath him to assist and serve.

Examples include:

- Pastors and Fivefold Ministry in Eph 4:11-12
- Elders
- Mature spiritual mentors
- Church leaders

Scripture instructs believers to respect and cooperate with them.

Example reference: Hebrews 13:17

Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, (Yielded) for they watch out for your souls.

3. Spiritual Mentors / Disciplers

When discipling someone, the discipler often acts as a **spiritual guide**, helping the believer apply Scripture in daily life.

This is not control — it is **guidance and accountability**.

Two Bible Examples of Spiritual Authority

1. The Roman Centurion – Understanding Authority

Reference: Gospel of Matthew 8:5–10

The Roman centurion said to Jesus:

"I am a man under authority, and I have soldiers under me."

Because he **understood authority**, he also understood how Jesus could command healing.

Jesus praised his faith. Jesus said, "I have not seen such great faith ..."

Discipleship lesson:

People who understand **being under authority** can also operate in **greater faith and authority**.

2. King Saul – Refusing God’s Authority

Reference: First Book of Samuel 15

God gave Saul instructions through the prophet Samuel, but Saul **partially obeyed** and did what he thought was better.

Samuel told him, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." Saul lost his kingship because he refused to fully submit to God's authority.

Discipleship lesson: Rejecting spiritual authority leads to **loss of spiritual covering and blessing**.

Benefits of Yielding to Spiritual Authority

When a believer walks under God’s authority structure, several blessings occur:

1. **Protection** - Spiritual leaders often **see danger earlier** and warn believers.
2. **Spiritual Growth** - A disciple grows faster when someone helps guide them.
3. **Accountability** - Accountability prevents spiritual drift and deception.
4. **Increased Spiritual Authority** - People who submit to authority often **receive greater authority from God**.
5. **Stability in Life** - Authority provides **order and structure**.

What Happens When Someone Rejects Spiritual Authority?

When someone refuses spiritual authority, several problems often develop.

1. Spiritual Isolation - They become their **own authority**.
2. Pride Develops - They become **unteachable**.
3. Deception Increases - Without accountability, it becomes easier to believe **wrong doctrine or ideas**.

Does the Demonic Realm Exploit Lack of Authority?

- Yes, in many cases it does.
- Spiritual authority creates **spiritual boundaries**.

When someone rejects God's authority structure, they often become more vulnerable to:

- Deception
- Confusion
- Spiritual oppression
- Destructive decisions

The enemy often attacks isolated believers.

Example: Someone Not Under Spiritual Authority

A practical example:

A believer says, "I don't need a church, pastor, or spiritual guidance. I just follow God myself."

Over time, they may begin to:

- Interpret Scripture incorrectly
- Drift into unusual beliefs
- Refuse correction
- Become spiritually isolated

Many people who fall into **false teachings or cult-like beliefs** first separated themselves from spiritual authority.

Simple Way to Explain This to Someone You Are Discipling

You might say: God designed the Christian life so we are not meant to walk alone. The Bible is our highest authority, but God also places spiritual leaders and mentors in our lives to guide, protect, and help us grow. When we stay within God's authority structure, we walk in greater protection, wisdom, and spiritual strength.

A Powerful Discipleship Principle

You cannot walk in spiritual authority if you are not willing to be under spiritual authority.

Even Jesus said, "I only do what I see My Father doing."(John 5:19)

If the Son of God walked under authority, **every disciple should also learn this principle.**

Self-Reflection Questions

1. Who are the spiritual leaders God has placed in my life?
2. Am I teachable and open to correction?
3. Do I test teaching with Scripture?
4. Am I walking in spiritual accountability?

Why Demons Recognize Spiritual Authority

The Seven Sons of Sceva

Reference: Acts of the Apostles 19:13–16

Seven Sons of Sceva attempted to cast out demons by saying:

“We command you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

But the demon responded:

“Jesus, I know, and Paul, I know; but who are you?”

The demon then attacked them, and they fled wounded.

What Was the Problem?

They were **using the name of Jesus without being under His authority.**

They wanted **spiritual power without spiritual submission.**

Without spiritual submission to a Pastor, Leader, or Oversight, the seven sons of Sceva sought spiritual power without surrendering to oversight and accountability.

Spiritual authority is not a formula of familiarity with Jesus. It comes from a relationship with and alignment to God’s divine order, not from self-preference or self-preservation.

Discipleship Principle

Authority in the kingdom of God flows like this:

Submission → Alignment → Authority

Spiritual authority is like being a police officer with a badge.

The authority is not in the person—it comes from the government that backs them.

In the same way, our spiritual authority comes from God when we live under His authority.

Even Jesus lived this principle. Reference: Gospel of John 8:28

Jesus said: “I do nothing on my own authority.”

If the **Son of God lived under authority**, every disciple should understand the power of spiritual authority.