

# Understanding Spiritual Authority (Part 2): The Purpose and the Limits of Authority

by Carter Conlon

---

*The purpose of spiritual authority is to lead believers out of the poverty of their old nature and into a new and supernatural life in Christ, and righteous authority is characterized by a right self-image, a desire to serve, and an open vision of Christ.*

**Duration:** 52:28

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:10, Matthew 6:33, John 1:29-30, John 1:37-39, Hebrews 4:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Authority"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that he is just a voice crying out for God, unable to change people's lives. He urges the listeners to open their hearts and make a straight way for Jesus, inviting Him into their inner beings and getting rid of all crooked ways. The preacher's main goal is to give the audience a knowledge of who Jesus is and who they can become in Him. He emphasizes that sitting under the preaching of an anointed word should result in a stirring and burning in the heart, leading to growth and transformation. The preacher also shares his personal testimony of separating from ministry and emphasizes the importance of doing things righteously. He encourages the listeners to trust in God's goodness and not develop a bitter spirit when authority fails or abuses them. The purpose of the ministry, according to the preacher, is to lead believers out of the poverty of their old nature and into a new and supernatural life in Christ. He emphasizes that coming to Christ means experiencing the living reality of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

---

## Transcript

I'm going to continue this evening, part two of a three-part series on spiritual authority. We started, I guess, two weeks ago on spiritual authority with a message called, What is Aaron that you murmur against him? And it was a discussion of the fact that God is a God of divine order, and he sets all authority in the body. And the authority that is placed in that body is put there because he is a God of order, and if it is a righteous authority, it's an authority that needs to be obeyed.

And we shared that it's not my response to the pastor necessarily that determines whether or not we're under authority, it's our response to the usher when we come in. The first usher we meet determines, that's the test of our heart, whether or not we really are under spiritual authority. Tonight I want to continue and talk about the purpose and the limits of authority, what we are to do in response to abusive and

questionable or unjust authority, even when it's exercised by those who are righteous.

And on Sunday morning, Lord willing, I'm going to finish with a message on authority and faith. If you'll go with me tonight to Ephesians chapter four, please, if you will. Ephesians chapter four, I'm going to speak tonight about the purpose and the limits of authority.

Now, Father, I stand before you tonight, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Lord, that you have so graced us with your manifested presence tonight. Lord, you put your stamp of favor on this gathering tonight by your presence.

We ask you, Lord, that you'd open your word to my heart and mind, and you open it to the hearts and minds of all who are in this house tonight. We have only one desire, Jesus, that you'd be lifted up and glorified, that you'd be loved and cherished and understood, desired, and that your life that you have so willingly given to all of us might be realized in each of our hearts and lives, that we might grow into that body called your church that you want us to be. Father, we thank you for this tonight.

Thank you for the quickening power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name. Now, I believe tonight as we're worshiping, I could see in my mind, you might not understand this yet, but you will in a moment, I see people getting up and leaving Egypt. I don't know how else to describe it.

Delivered from a present situation or perhaps delivered from a past situation. I sense in my heart that there are people here tonight who have been abused by authority, some by authority in the church, some by authority in the home, whatever the situation is, but authority has abused you. And because of it, it's extremely difficult for you to come in to the house of God and trust authority.

And so you determine in your heart that, well, I'm going to come in and I'll be under Christ's authority, but you can forget people. I've had enough of them not coming under their authority. Are you with me tonight? I know there are people here that feel that.

We've all been there from time to time. But unfortunately, it doesn't work that way in the body of Jesus Christ. And if you're here on Sunday morning, you're going to see, and I can conclusively prove to you that there is an inseparable link between being under authority and having eyes of faith in the word of God.

Ephesians chapter 4. Now, this is not an exhaustive study. I mean, you can get out your concordance and you can study and you can go deeper than what I'm about to do tonight. But I am bringing to you what I feel the Holy Spirit wants to have emphasized from this pulpit tonight, and he knows the reasons why.

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 10. He, being Jesus, of course, that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill, or fulfill also is the word for that, all things. And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

And that means to build or spiritually advance the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Now, it doesn't mean that we reach perfection in this body.

Our perfection, of course, is the righteousness of Christ that is freely given to us. That's the perfection that God speaks about. But the scripture in Ephesians is telling us that Christ rose from the dead.

He sits at the right hand of all authority and all power now. And he gave a ministry to the church. And through this ministry, people who come to Christ are to be brought to an understanding of who they are in him.

Or who he is in them. What it means to be born again by the Spirit of God. What it means to be part of the church of Jesus Christ.

What it means to be living in a realm as it is where the supernatural life and power of God is now upon you. You're no longer limited by your past. You're not limited by culture or language or education.

All of those things are gone now. You're a new creation if you've come to Jesus Christ. You have equal access to the throne of God with everyone here in this sanctuary today.

The ironic thing is, it's not the powerful. It's not necessarily the educated or the cultured or those with great giftings and abilities. It's really the hungry heart that gets the revelation.

Now, folks, that excites me, I think, more than anything else in the body of Christ. I don't have to be anything in myself but hungry for the things of God. And God promises that when I come to his throne, he's going to feed me.

And in order to feed me, he's going to set me under those that he has established to represent him in his church. Now, we're speaking, of course, tonight in the context of spiritual authority. He gives offices of ministry.

And through these offices, he gives knowledge of himself. That's really what it's all about. I'm not sent into this pulpit to dazzle you with spiritual niceties that you may never be able to understand or apply.

I'm to give you a knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and who he is in you and who you can become in him. There should be a stirring in your heart. If you're sitting under the preaching of anointed word, there should be a stirring, a burning in your heart.

There should be an advance, as it is, from image to image and glory to glory. You should never, ever sit under the word of God and not be aware that God desires to do a change in your life. He desires to bring you to another place in himself.

Hallelujah. Another corner of his mercy. Another touch of the strength in the mind and the heart that only God can give to those that are his.

The ministry that is given of God has a purpose. And that purpose is to lead each believer out of the poverty of his old nature. We came bankrupt to Jesus Christ.

We came infused and impressed by a fallen nature and a fallen ideas about even God and eternity. And the ministry that truly represents Christ is to lead us out of that poverty and by faith into a new and a supernatural life which Jesus himself says, I want to live in you and through you. We don't come to a concept of God when we come to Christ.

We come to the living reality of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit living his life within us. Oh, folks, that just blows the borders away. That pulls the pegs of our old tent right out of the ground.

There are now no limits. Do you understand this tonight? There are no limits to those who are in Christ. You are not limited by anything of your past.

You're a new creation. Now, for this purpose, the Holy Spirit has offices, as I read earlier in the church. And these offices exercise God given spiritual authority over those whose lives they minister to.

By virtue of the fact they're called of God, they're given an authority. It's undeniable. I'm exercising an authority in some dimension over your life tonight in the fact that you're sitting here in this house.

If I say stand up, most will probably stand up. If I say sit down, you'll sit down. I exercise authority in the sense that I'm opening this word and asking you that based on the witness of the Holy Spirit and your knowledge of the Bible that you will let God speak through this earthly vessel to you.

And that's an authority. And it's a spiritual authority that God establishes in his church. Now, we have in the scripture examples of righteous authority.

And I want to look at one of them tonight in the book of John, chapter 1. A righteous authority. This man called John the Baptist was raised of God. He was ordained, as it is, of the Spirit to prepare people's hearts for the coming of Christ into their lives.

And by virtue of the fact that we know him historically now, we know he was a righteous man. Jesus himself made a declaration that he was one of the greatest, if not the greatest prophet that ever lived. Now, here are some of the specifics of a righteous authority.

If you are sitting under a righteous authority, the very things I'm going to speak about should be happening. I'm speaking now from a spiritual sense to you. You're sitting in a church.

You're listening to a tape. You're under some kind of a spiritual authority. Now, here's the mark of true authority that represents God.

In verse 22, they said to him, that's John, Who art thou that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? And he said, I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Isaiah. And so spiritual authority that is ordained of God.

There's a cry that comes from the hearts of men and women who are truly called of God for people who are listening to what God gave them to say to open their hearts to Christ. It's as simple as that. John says, I am just a voice.

I'm crying out for God that they would open their hearts and make a straight way for the one who is coming after me. I'm just an announcer. I'm not the one who can change people's lives.

Folks, I can't change your life. I could drag you up and down Broadway from now until Christ returns. And I can't change your life.

There's nothing I can do for you. All I can do is cry out to you from the heart of God and say, open your heart. Make a straight way for him.

Invite him to come right into the inner core of your being. Get rid of all the crooked ways. Get rid of all the warped thinking about today and tomorrow and the future.

And get these things out of your life and let Jesus come straight to the very center of your heart. I think of Jesus at the Last Supper dipping the bread into the wine and offering it one more time to Judas who was about to betray him. And righteous leadership warns the sinner and pleads for him to turn from his ways.

Righteous leadership does not soft-pedal sin because it is only sin that separates men from God. It is sin that blinds the eyes of men to the reality of Jesus Christ being lived out within their lives. And righteous leadership will not back-pedal on the issue of sin, but will confront people not because they have a desire to lord it over God's heritage, but they have a desire to see God's heritage come alive in the power of Jesus Christ.

And to see God's people become everything that Christ has determined in his heart that they should be. Righteous authority will challenge the saint to consider and to yield his life to the will of God. Not just to sit in church.

Not just to occupy a comfortable pew. Folks, righteous authority. I remember the day that Brother Dave got out in this pulpit.

Some of you may have been here years ago. And he stood in this pulpit. I had never heard it before.

He got in the pulpit and he said, Now, a lot of you folks have been here a long time. You've been seven, eight years in this church. You've been well taught.

And he said, It's time to go. You need to get out of here. And you need to start serving God.

He said, At that time, we had people lined up in the rotunda. He said, We've got unsaved people trying to get in here. And you are sitting in their seats.

He said, You need to pray. I'm believing. If I had it correctly, He said, I'm believing for 300 people to leave this church.

And people did. They prayed. And he said, Find another church.

Find places where there's a good work of God and go and help the people do that. That's a righteous authority. Righteous authority is not trying to hold the people to itself all the time.

And making people feel like they're going to hell if they head out the door with the leading of God to fellowship in another area. Righteous authority says, No. The issue of why we're preaching is that you find the will of God for your life and you do that.

If that's here, then fine. Do it here. But find the will of God and do the will of God for your life.

In verse 27, He said, He said, He said, He, it is who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe latch that I'm not worthy to unloose. You see, righteous authority has a right self-image. Righteous authority comes to serve and not to be served.

In Luke chapter 22, I could probably just read it to you for time's sake. Jesus is speaking to his own disciples in verse 25. And he said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

But you shall not be so. But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve. For whether is greater he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth, is not he that sitteth at meat, he said, but I am among you as he that serves.

And you see, righteous authority has a right perspective. Christ himself said, The Gentiles or the unsaved are lords over the people. They dominate the people.

He said, but I've not come to dominate. I've come to serve humanity. And the servant, the scripture tells us, is not greater than his Lord.

In the manner that the Father has sent Christ, Christ also has sent us who are representatives of him in his church. And those that are righteous in leadership have a right self-image. It's not about themselves.

It's about Jesus Christ. Folks, I'm telling you, it's a warning sign when men or women begin to talk more about themselves than they talk about Jesus Christ. It's a warning sign.

If you ever walk out of this church, and the name of the pastor is on your lips, and not the name of Jesus, it's a warning sign. I have failed you, if it's not the name of Christ that is on your lips. You ought to leave this house speaking about Jesus, speaking about his power, speaking about his glory, speaking about the wonderful future he has for you.

It's not about the pastors. It's not about the choir. It's not about the other.

It's about Jesus and Jesus alone. Righteous authority in verses 29 to 34 has an open vision of Christ. God promises that if men and women are standing in leadership positions in his church and they are righteous, he says, I will give you an open heaven.

There will be an open vision. I could, without argument, prove this all through the scriptures. Every righteous man or woman of God, Old Testament and new, that has had a right perspective of themselves, have stood to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ with the right motive, have an open vision of Christ.

And not some spooky vision. Not some little whisper and peep in the universe. They see it in the scriptures.

There's an open vision. They can open the book and show it to you, and you can see it for yourself. It's plain, it's clear, because everything is pointed to Jesus Christ.

Verse 29 says, The next day John seeth Jesus coming to him and saith, Listen to the revelation now. Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. Now, how could he know that, if he didn't have an open heaven? Jesus himself has not even revealed it yet.

But John, in the spirit, has this open vision of Christ. Verse 30 says, This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man, which is preferred before me, for he was before me. John saying, No, I'm just here to announce somebody that is much greater than I am.

And that's the reason I've been put into the ministry. Verse 31, he says, I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest to Israel. Therefore am I come baptizing with water.

And John, bear record. Verse 32 saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon

whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same as he which baptizes with the Holy Ghost.

Now, here he's going even further. Theologically, he's now into the book of Acts and Christ has not even begun his ministry yet. This is amazing.

He sees that he's the Son of God. He's going to die for the sins of the world. Not only that, he's going to fill people with the Holy Ghost.

How could he know that? Unless he had an open heaven. Jesus is the official start, in a sense, of the ministry of Christ is when John baptized him. And this is this pre-moment before this actually was revealed.

And he said, And I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God. Verse 35, Righteous ministry releases people and encourages them to follow Jesus. Again, the next day after John stood and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold, the Lamb of God.

And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. Righteous leadership does not draw to itself. Righteous leadership does not build the church around itself.

Righteous leadership has an open vision of Christ and says to the people, Follow Him. Follow Him. You see Him.

I've spoken about Him. There's been a revelation come through my life to you. But here He is.

Behold Him for yourself. Behold Him and see Him. And when the two disciples heard him speak, it says in verse 37, they followed Jesus.

Oh folks, if you're not encouraged to follow Jesus under ministry, then something is wrong with the ministry. You should not be encouraged to follow a man. You should be encouraged to follow Jesus.

It's His will and His way for your life. And then of course in verses 38 and 39, Jesus turned and saw them following and said, What do you seek? And they said, Rabbi, which is to say, Master, where dwellest thou? And He said to them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day for it was about the tenth hour.

And you see, the ministry of the righteous or righteous authority will always lead you to a place of rest that only Jesus can give you. A place of rest. There'll be this desire in your heart to dwell where God is.

And where God is, there's rest. That's a righteous authority. Thank God.

I thank God for the ministry of Pastor David. I thank God for righteous authority. If you've been sitting here at any amount of time under the ministry that the Lord used to found this church, think of the people that are all over the world living for God.

Think of the lives and hearts that have been changed. Think of the hopeless that have been brought into the hope of Christ. And the numbers of people who have found rest that only Jesus Christ can give.

I thank God for that with all of my heart. Thank God for Pastor Neil, Pastor William, Pastor Patrick, the ministry team, the leaders of this church that I believe with all my heart are godly and righteous men.

Thank God for Teresa who stands in this pulpit, a righteous woman.

No desire but to see God's people move into the rest that we ourselves, by His grace, are discovering more every day. It's an awesome thing to walk in the rest of God. It's an awesome thing to be given to the ministry of God.

Not having to hold anything tight. Everything is just simply offered up as a sacrifice to Him. And whatever He chooses to do, it's His prerogative to do it.

Now, the opposite to righteous authority is found in Exodus chapter 1, if you will. Now, from time to time, even God's people will find themselves under an unrighteous authority. And I don't know if there was ever a more unrighteous authority than Pharaoh in Exodus chapter 1. There's a lot of Pharaohs in the church of Jesus Christ, believe me.

Unrighteous authority. People who have gotten to places of leadership, but they're not ordained of God to be there. They're self-appointed, self-promoted.

They made it to the top and they made it by climbing. They made it through ambition. And the characteristics that we spoke about that were in John the Baptist, these leaders can never exhibit.

They don't know these things. They cannot preach an open vision of Christ. They cannot lead people to the rest of Christ.

They cannot release them to the ministry that Christ has for them because, firstly, they themselves know nothing about it. They have no open heaven. And Pharaoh, in Exodus chapter 1, verse 10, said, Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply.

And it come to pass that when there falleth out any war, they join also our enemies and fight against us. And so get them up out of the land. You see, unrighteous authority is a leadership that is fearful that the people of God would escape from under its control.

Now, folks, some of you have been there. You know what this is all about. A leadership that just lives in fear that somebody's going to escape its control.

They can't preach the rest of Christ because they're using people to achieve their own objectives. Verse 11 says, Therefore did they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities.

And there are so many of these types of things going on today in the name of Jesus Christ. Men who are afraid to lose authority over the people. And all they can do is use the people for their own objectives.

Because they're not servants, as Christ said there to be. They're not servants to the body. The body, as it is, is a means to achieve their own sense of greatness and destiny.

And they use the people for their own gain. They feed them straw and send them out to make bricks and build monuments to their own egos. Folks, that's going on en masse in the American church today.

Theirs is a gospel of works. Verse 14, it says, They made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar and brick and all manner of service in the field. All their service where they made them serve was with rigor.

It's a gospel of works. It's serving a Christ of their own making. This Christ who is quite often unsatisfied with the efforts of His people.

He leaves the believer largely unfulfilled in Him. Think about cults. I know you've all had exposure to it.

Some of you have come from cults. Cults are infamous for this. A gospel of works.

Salvation through service to the organization as it is. Put you in a foolish looking outfit and set you out on the street with bells and pamphlets in your hand telling you somehow this is righteous. And folks, this goes on even in the name of Christ.

Gospels of works constantly sending the people out, constantly creating this dissatisfaction. Not being able to lead them to the fullness that is in Christ. Not being able to lead them to the rest that is in Christ.

They often preach and teach fulfillment and purpose through association with themselves and not through Christ. And that's the earmark of a cult. That's the earmark of unrighteous authority.

Not that you're saved through Christ. Not that you're fulfilled through Christ. You're saved through association with us.

And you're fulfilled through association with us. You're fulfilled by staying with us. And that's the trademark of a cult.

I don't care what the name is on the door. Any church that tells you that you can't be saved but through associating with them as a cult and unrighteous authority is in that pulpit. Not ordained of God.

That is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is not the freedom that God brings His people into. They feed the people straw because they cannot lead them to a green pasture.

They cannot lead them to the life of Christ because they know nothing about Christ's life. They stand in the pulpit quite often with other agendas than the agenda of Christ. They stand there and they're fulfilling their own sense of destiny by the numbers of people they can lord it over.

They're moving in political arenas. They're moving because they want to be in Christian riches themselves. And they feed straw, which means a gospel that does not satisfy.

It may feed the inner cravings of the fallen nature of men, but it does not satisfy because it does not bring the believer to Christ. And then they send the people out with this straw to make bricks. Go out, work hard, come back in, give more, give more, give more.

So that we can build more. We can make more. We can make our towers taller and we can make our buildings bigger.

Straw to make bricks. And quite often all they're doing is building monuments to themselves. Their name is on every corner of every brick.

And lastly, anybody who rises and has any life within them and seems to be a challenge to their domination of the people is cast into the river. Exodus 1.22 says, Pharaoh charged all his people saying, Every son that is born he shall cast into the river. In other words, they're made to feel like they've died spiritually because they may begin to question.

They may begin to ask about some things that are going on. They may begin to open the Scripture and say, Hey, you said this, but I see something in the Scripture that I think we need to take a look at. And anybody that looks like they have life, anybody that looks like they might be a threat to their domination is literally cast into the river.

They're made to feel like they've died spiritually because they open the Bible and begin to read it or they begin to choose to fellowship elsewhere. You ever been in a church like that? You come to the leader and say, You know, we've been praying and we feel the Lord wants us to go here. And they make you feel like you've all of a sudden got leprosy.

You died spiritually. You're a heathen because you're feeling a leading of God to go and help another pastor in another town. But yet it happens all the time.

And it's an example of unrighteous leadership. And how many people go out the back door wounded, unable to trust anymore? Their leading really is of God. Yes, maybe it was a good church in some measure, but they really do feel led to go somewhere else because God has the right to do that, folks.

And even those that are listening tonight are listening by tape in the future. If you have found yourself in such a place and cry out to God, He'll come and show you the way out. Because in the very next chapter, the Lord said in chapter 3, verse 7 to Moses, I've seen the affliction of my people, which are in Egypt, and I've heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, and I know their sorrows.

And I've come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large land flowing with milk and honey and to a place, of course, that is occupied at that time by others. Well, folks, if a person cries out, they'll be set free. They'll be delivered from unrighteous authority that is over them.

Now, we have preached authority in the context of righteous fellowship. And yet the Lord's authority flows through human vessels. And sometimes mistakes can be made.

We have authority in this church, for example. There's a board that is over this church. And underneath that board are pastors.

And underneath the pastors are elders. And underneath the elders are ministry leaders. And underneath the ministry leaders are various levels of authority and structure in the church.

So there's a flow as it is of God through His body and the authority that He establishes. But these are human vessels. And mistakes can be made.

And so the question arises, I want to obey authority. You're in Times Square Church and you say, I want to obey, but what do I do if I feel that authority is in error, if it's abusive or acting beyond its limits? I've been picking on the ushers from the beginning of this teaching, so I may as well continue doing that tonight. What if you're an usher in this church and all of a sudden the usher immediately above you may not be the head usher, but comes to you and says, I have new instructions tonight.

If you find anybody talking while Pastor Carter is preaching or sleeping, you're to slap them as hard as you can in the back of the head. Now you want to obey authority, but you have a sense that this might not be quite the way God wants to do things in His church. So what do you do? How do I deal with this? If I'm sure I'm in a right... Now if you're in an unrighteous place, you just have to get out.

It's as simple as that. If you're under unrighteous authority, get out. I don't know how else to say it.

Pray, God, show me. If you're not even sure, pray, God, show me. And when He shows you, just simply get out.

Just trust Him. He's going to send a word to you and He's going to deliver you. But if you're in a place that you yourself are convinced, this is a righteous authority which I can trust, but yet I feel that I'm being put in a position where I'm being asked to do something which I don't feel is right.

What do I do? How do I deal with this? Now, I'm going to take you now to Matthew chapter 18. And in this passage we're going to look at, there is a principle of action. It has the context of a brother who is offended by another brother.

What do I do? Or I see somebody who's trespassed against me. In other words, how do I deal with this? So I'm going to take this as a type, an example, of how do I deal with this? What's an appropriate way to do this? Now, first of all, in Matthew 18, 15, If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Folks, you don't know how many times situations that get way out of hand could be averted.

Especially authority situations if people would just simply do this. But they do the opposite. First of all, you should go always in humility.

If you're approaching authority, you should approach authority in humility. Never with arrogance, never argumentatively, because you end up just in a conflict. But what a lot of people do is when they feel the authority is acting in a way that they are having difficulty obeying, they bring others into the discussion.

And the others who they bring in themselves are not in a position of authority to bring about any change in the situation. And unwittingly, they're just simply causing division in the body. And it's so important to do it right.

Do it God's way. Do it once and do it right. Actually, Proverbs 26, 17, that says, those that pass by and intermeddle with trouble that doesn't belong to them are like a person who takes a dog by the ears.

Now, if you don't understand that, the next time you're out walking the street and you see a real mean-looking dog, bend down on one knee and grab his ears. You'll quickly understand the context of this scripture. It's so important.

If I have a problem with a person above me, I'm not to take that to somebody else. At least not initially. And never take it to somebody who has no authority to bring about change.

Because ultimately what will happen is you will resolve your conflict and that other person will be left with a very sour feeling about the person you talked to them about. And you will have caused division in the body. Don't do this.

Go to that person alone. Entreat them. Offer an alternate suggestion.

Say, I don't think slapping people in the back of the head is the best way to do this. How about if we just shake them on the shoulder? Just offer an alternate suggestion. Or if you have a scripture that backs your position, say, well, here, don't go argumentatively.

Go humbly. Quite often you'll find the other person says, yeah, I never saw it quite that way. Maybe you're right.

And if authority is righteous, righteous authority can be questioned. Righteous authority is not closed. Righteous authority is not dogmatic.

Righteous authority doesn't say you're going to hell because you have a contrary opinion to what I say. Righteous authority says let's go to the Scriptures and let's see what the Scriptures says. If the Scriptures might be gray on this area, then let's go to some other godly people and see what they have to say.

That's the evidence of righteous authority. It's not afraid to be challenged on what it does. Then we go on.

If that person will not hear you, then it says in verse 16, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. Now, I'm speaking in the context, remember, of authority. And the way I would see this applying is that I take it now I'm an usher.

The person immediately above me is not willing to hear what I have to say. And I'm deeply convinced that what he or she has instructed me to do is wrong. So now I take it to the next level of authority, perhaps the head usher, and the elder that's in charge of the ministry.

I'm following the procedure. I can tell them. I've spoken to this person.

Here's my position. I don't think it's right what I've been asked to do. I take it to the next level of authority.

Now, at every level of authority, I have to be willing to be personally corrected. Don't get so dogmatic in your position that you can't be spoken to by leadership that you know is righteous. And then if that fails, then in verse 17, it says, if you neglect to hear them, then tell it to the church.

Now, that means bring it to the final authority. Bring it to the pastors of the church. The last word as it is in the authority in the church.

And I've had this happen just recently. Somebody who felt that they were wrong in a certain situation and didn't feel they could get satisfaction from the people involved. And it came to me.

I got it in a letter. I looked at the letter, spoke to the person in ministry and was able to adjudicate the situation and bring it about so that everybody was happy with the way that this came out. People were apologetic, who needed to be in this situation.

And this is the way things need to be done in the church of Jesus Christ. There's a divine order. But that divine order has an undergirding of humility and servanthood.

You see, it all works together. If I'm a servant to the body and I see somebody that's getting wounded, or I see somebody that's abusing authority, I'm not to come and hit them on the head. Of course, that's what they're coming if they're an usher about in the first time.

I'm to come as it is, as we heard Pastor Williams speak on the other day, and wash their feet. I'm to come and help them to see. But ultimately, I have to make the final decision about what will be the faith and the practice of faith in this church.

Now, if you're still sure that you're right, you've done the best that you know how, and everyone up the line says, no, this is the way we want to do it. We want to slap people in the back of the head who are talking or falling asleep during the preaching. And if you're still sure that you're right, and you're no longer comfortable with the present spiritual authority, and I've had this happen to me as a young Christian.

I was in this position one time, and I knew that something that was happening was not right. I did everything I could. I spoke to those in the chain of authority.

I went finally right to the pastor, and I said, I just feel, according to the scriptures, this thing is not right. And I was sure in my heart that I was standing on scriptural ground. The only recourse in this particular situation is to leave the ministry, at least the ministry, if not the church, if you are no longer comfortable sitting under that authority.

Now, if you have to leave the ministry, if you have to leave the church in the long run, do so honorably and peaceably. Don't become a sower of discord. Don't let the testimony of your life be how wrong other people have been along the way.

You'll end up losing your own focus. You'll end up losing your own testimony. You'll end up losing the ability to see Christ.

You'll end up, in your own heart, moving yourself into a corner where you can never trust authority again. And if you can't trust authority, you can't come into God's order. If you can't come into God's order, you can't fully really grow as a Christian.

And I'll prove to you conclusively Sunday morning, you can't have faith. That God says you have to have only, and you can only receive it if you're walking under spiritual authority. If you can't walk under the existing authority, find an authority which you can trust, and you feel is releasing you and leading you to follow Christ.

James 3.18 says, The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Find an authority. Get under an authority somewhere that you can trust.

If you can't trust the authority of the church that you're in, then find an authority you can trust. But folks, get under authority somewhere, because that is God's order for His church. There is no escaping it.

David, the king, was under the authority of Saul. Saul was the king. David was under his authority.

But yet, something happened where a separation became necessary. I mean, Saul was trying to kill him. I guess that's as necessary as it can get.

I tell you, if you're in a ministry meeting and somebody throws a spear at you, it's time. It's time to move on and get under another authority. But even though David had to be separated from Saul, and David clearly knew Saul was a madman, but yet he made a choice to honor him.

He made a choice. You don't find David speaking evil of Saul. Even after Saul was killed in battle, David is mourning openly before his men and says, oh, Saul and Jonathan, they were swifter than eagles.

They were stronger than lions. There's a deep, deep inset grief that got into his heart because he knew this man had been anointed of God. Yet he had abused that anointing and position.

And he became himself, Saul, an unrighteous authority. And David had to flee from him. But he chose to honor him.

And folks, it's a choice that we make. If you can't say something nice, don't say anything. You see, it's God who's got the responsibility of letting people know the Spirit that is animating those who are over His church.

And God can let you know. Folks, it's thousands of years later and you and I know the Spirit that animated Saul. It wasn't up to David to let the world know.

God says, no. You do what I ask you to do and I'll let the world know what animates this man. I'll let them know.

You'll consider the place of the wicked, Psalm 37 says. And it will no longer be. God says, they'll flourish for a day, but I'll cut them down.

And everybody will know the Spirit that animated this type of ministry. It's so important to do it right, folks. I've had to separate from ministry in the past.

I've had to walk away. And I've asked God for the grace to do it righteously. And He's given me the grace.

And my testimony today is not about the wrong that somebody else may have done. My testimony today is about the goodness of God that leads those who trust in Him. That delivers us from getting a bitter spirit when we have been abused by authority.

When authority has failed us. When authority that we trusted turns out to be fragile, frail, and in some cases corrupted. And we walk away.

I think what saved me over the years was the fact that I began to realize that I serve Jesus Christ. Serving with all my heart. And He has an order.

There was a season in my life where it was hard to trust authority. I had a leader over me one time that I had more than one that were overtly corrupt. And I became aware of it.

It was very hard to follow this authority. It was hard after it was over. You're a young Christian.

You want to trust. You want to believe. I was a cop.

I was naive. I expect corruption in the world. I didn't expect it in the church.

And then you walk in and you find the same type of thievery going on in the name of Christ that is going on in the world. The manipulation of the people and the financial schemes and the lies. And it's so easy to walk away and say I'll never trust again but then I never would have grown.

I would have walked out of God's order. Become an authority unto myself. And commit the same foolish sin that Saul did.

Become my own priest. Make my own decisions. No longer walking in the will of God.

No longer able to see. Can't hear. Because I've stepped out.

Because I was abused by spiritual authority. Or let me say it this way. The spiritual authority that I trusted abused my trust.

I vowed. I don't know if you're supposed to vow. But I did in my heart.

I will never abuse the authority of Jesus Christ. Never. I'd rather be dead.

There are people here tonight that your testimony is not about where Christ is leading you but it's about someone who has abused you spiritually. Or another authority that you trusted and it's been unrighteous. And this is your story.

It's not about where Jesus is leading me. It's about where I've come from. You rehearse it.

You tell people. You're not sitting in a restaurant over coffee with a new friend for more than 15 minutes and it's all pouring out of your mouth one more time. And you're rehearsing the story.

And it's animating you and it's governing your life. And folks, there's only one way out of this. It's that you've got to forgive and you have to let God bring justice where justice is due.

Now God brings justice in two ways. He judges or He forgives. And you have to be willing to let it go either way.

But forgive. You've got to walk away from the past. There's so many people in the church today who are not growing spiritually because they were new and young and they trusted and they walked in and they found out the whole thing is corrupt.

And then they wind up in a place where there is a righteous authority but they can't come under it. And because they can't come under it they can't fully grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. You have to walk away from the past, folks.

You have to walk away. And you do it by faith. Jesus, give me the grace to walk away from the past, the past spiritual abuse and the abuse of authority and to be able to trust God again to bring me to a place where I can grow in Christ.

To be able to reach out one more time and trust. One more time. Say, Jesus, I'm going to trust one more time.

And I'll tell you something tonight. God will not fail you. God will not fail you.

You can have a cry in your heart and say, God, please, give me discernment from this day forward and don't let me walk five minutes under unrighteous authority. Show it to me very quickly. If there's something in my heart that enables me to be captivated by unrighteous gospel, then show it to me.

Get me out of it. Let my heart be clean and pure and bring me into a place where I can trust the authority that you have placed over me. Because spiritual authority is your idea, Jesus.

It's not mine. Hallelujah. Father, I have.

I have spoken your heart. And I thank you, Lord, over the years that you taught me about authority. These were hard lessons.

I walked through the valley of the shadow of death more than one time. It would have been so easy to be bitter. It would have been so easy to spend the rest of my life railing on unjust authority.

But you taught me to trust. You taught me, Jesus. Father, I thank you for it with all of my heart.

And I pray that you give in this house those that have been abused spiritually the ability to walk away tonight, to lay down the grievances and the stories, and to come again to a place of trusting God's true spiritual authority. Lord, I thank you for this. I believe, God, that there are people going to get up out of their seats and walk out of Egypt.

They're going to walk out of the past, the pain, the mistrust, and one more time, one more time, one more time, be yielded to the grace of God. Hallelujah. Thank you.

You know, sometimes, some altar calls are a miracle deliverance, folks. That's all I can tell you. They're a miracle deliverance.

Not only are you coming out of something, you're coming into something else. Out of Egypt as it is and into the place of God's promise. Back into where God wants you to be.

Hallelujah. It's hard to trust. We all know that, but it's not impossible.

Jesus said it this way. You are in the Father's hand. That's authority.

If you are a true follower of Christ, nobody's going to ever take you out of the Father's hand. Nobody. God has you in His hand.

And the fact that you're even at this altar tonight is a sign that He loves you and He's going to help you in the days ahead to trust again. God Almighty, I thank You, Lord. This is a deliverance that only You can do, Lord.

To help everyone who's at this altar tonight to lay down the grievances, the list of wrongs, the authority, be it father, mother, be it pastor, priest, be it police officer, whatever it was, the abuse of authority that caused the heart to say never again, never again will I walk under the authority of man. But Lord, this is not Your way. You have an authority in Your church.

And You establish it because You are a God of divine order. You teach us how to walk as a body in the manner that honors You, in a manner that speaks of love one to another. This body is to be built and edify itself in love, in the love of God.

Pray with me now. Lord Jesus, I come to You tonight as my authority. And I hear Your word.

And You're telling me to forgive everyone who has abused authority over my life. And so in obedience to You, I release this person and these people from the debt of the wrong that they did to me. I forgive them completely and entirely without reservation.

I open my heart, I open my hands, and I release them of the debt that they owe me. Jesus, I'm asking You now, teach me, help me to walk under authority, Your authority, the authority that You give to every office, every person that You've called in Your church. Lord Jesus, I'm trusting that You will protect me as I choose to obey You.

I believe that You're going to give me an open heaven, an understanding of spiritual truths, the faith to believe, and Your life is going to become my life. In every area of my mind and my heart, I will know Your life because I've obeyed You. Now, thank Him.

Hallelujah.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11912.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/carter-conlon/understanding-spiritual-authority-part-2-the-purpose-and-the-limits-of-authority/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**