



“Biblical Lessons on Authority”

September 2020 VLOG

Authority has a lot of different faces – some personal, some incredibly *impersonal*. A teenager knows the face of their parent who exercises authority over their curfew. A Marine private knows her drill sergeant’s authority as he barks orders.

But there is also *faceless* authority -- political polls, medical studies, economic statistics, and all those other unseen forces that seem to control the airwaves, internet and financial markets. So whether it’s a pandemic, social unrest, an election or the economy, figuring out WHO or WHAT has authority, and who we give authority to, **matters.**

Like all tough issues, the Bible is where we can go for answers. And what I’m finding is so incredibly encouraging. One story after another upends assumptions about where people assume authority resides –

- whether its **political authority** (with a king, a Pharaoh or a Caesar),
- **military** authority (with commanding armies),
- **Religious** authority (popular gods widely revered),
- **Legal authority** (courts & decisions that appear irreversible)
- or **economic authority** (like so called ‘logical’ trends that involve masses).

The Bible instead is pointing us to a divine authority, God, that reverses or overturns even what looked immovable and daunting. Remember these examples of individuals challenging the so-called governing authority of their time?

- Moses confronting Pharaoh to allow a slave population to leave Egypt;
- David challenging the huge Philistine, Goliath;
- Elijah defying Baal worship in front of the deities’ champion, Queen Jezebel, and her 800 prophets;
- Elisha standing fearlessly against an encircling Syrian army;
- Daniel face to face with the all-powerful King Nebuchadnezzar



- Paul challenging mob rule in the Ephesus theater
- Peter and John defying the Jewish High priest and counsel by preaching Christ Jesus' teachings fearlessly in the open
- And of course, Jesus fearlessly standing against religious and secular authorities during his ministry and trial

The Bible is one unending lesson through the centuries of where we can turn when we want to know where real authority lies – no matter how entrenched or resourceful other forces appear to be.

And what I love is how often God's authority supplies directives that are probably profoundly different than the individuals anticipated. Wouldn't it be great if we could go back and ask...

- ...Gideon if he thought it was a great idea to *reduce* his army instead of increase it when an enemy was bearing down.
- Or see if Aaron and Miriam really believed their brother was God's chosen initially – especially when the Red Sea was in front of them and the Egyptian army thundered from behind;
- Or if Joseph was amazed that an angel directive was NOT to break off his engagement with his fiancée, Mary, even though she was pregnant

But that's the point, isn't it? When we acknowledge the divine source of authority – of wisdom, foresight and sound judgment-- we make different and better decisions, take wiser actions. How do we do that? By staying conscious of the power of God through the Scriptures. There's a wonderful verse in Joshua that captures this:

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.

Joshua 1:8. New Revised Standard Version



What an ideal time for each one of us who know the power of God's direction, that divine authority, to call on it on behalf of these national and global challenges that affect not just us – but millions.

The more I learn about these Biblical figures, the more real they have become to me as role models. And I so appreciate that the course they were directed to take had twists and turns with unexpected outcomes that defied human logic. They knew, as we do, that there is a power and presence of the God who is Love itself directing, controlling, overseeing, guiding every one of us –including those in leadership positions.

And thinking of Jesus' followers, they were working men and women, parents, owners, business people, farmers, laborers. Yet they recognized that the Messiah's power was God-given, and realized:

...he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:29)

Jesus himself told them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matt. 28:18).

So as we enter this Fall season of an election, health challenges and a recovering economy, let's be like our Biblical friends who knew where true authority lies, place our confidence in the same God-power Christ Jesus understood and lived, and watch how it can resolve the thorniest problems, and bring a much-needed calm to our world. If lions' dens and fiery furnaces didn't stop *their* forward march, then the modern equivalent certainly can't stop ours.