

The Pride of Life

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Previously, we looked at two areas in life with the potential to become stumbling blocks, which I called '[Pennies](#)' and '[Petticoats](#)'. In this short article, we'll address the third area of 'Power', covering godly, Christian leadership.

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Power Can Corrupt

Lord Acton, a British historian of the late nineteenth century, wrote; "*Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely*". This proverbial saying by Lord Acton conveys the opinion that as a person's power increases, their moral compass can diminish, and abuse is often a result. Having said this, we must accept the fact that power is nevertheless an integral aspect of all types of leadership and needs to be exercised on different levels, including that of delegated authority. This is why leaders in all walks of life are measured by how wisely, justly, compassionately and appropriately they exercise their power in any given situation.

Christian Leaders Should Look Different to the World

Christian leaders functioning on all levels of authority are no exception. They must always find ways of directing their leadership conduct in accordance with the teachings of Christ and the New Testament Apostles, as expressed in their writings. When godly leaders, or Christians with God-given authority and responsibilities, deviate from the Biblical model, they have the potential to join those who exercise abusive, manipulative and even demonic power.

A leadership style that exercises authority within a spirit of compassion and conviction.

What the Bible Says

Christ Himself made it quite clear that His New Testament view on authority differed greatly from secular views on authority and went on to say in Matthew's Gospel account, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise excessive authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV).

Peter the Apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, *"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock"*. 1 Peter 5:1-4 (NIV).

Paul the Apostle addressed this same issue in his second epistle written to the Church in Corinth, *"I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm"*. 2 Corinthians 1:23-24 (NIV).

Here we see Paul, as with Peter, exhorting leaders to model a leadership style different to that of the world. A leadership style that exercises authority within a spirit of compassion and conviction.

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Working For The Lord

In Paul's letter to the church at Colossae in chapter 3:18-24 (NIV), he also addresses the submissive and godly attitude employees must have towards their employers, children towards their parents, fathers towards their children, employers toward their staff and husbands towards their wives; *"Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving"*. As mentioned, the exercising of authority is a vital aspect of leadership, but how one exercises it is of paramount importance.

Godly Headship

In closing, let me briefly share an account of a counselling session I had a few years back with a husband and wife. In this situation, the husband was exercising abusive authority through his misunderstanding of the Scriptures. On their arrival, the husband in question appeared very angry and frustrated (witnessed by his body language) and the wife looked browbeaten, exhausted and at the end of herself. He proceeded to tell me that his wife was unsubmitive and had an independent

streak. In his frustration, he started to bang his fist on the chair and say that she needed to know he is the head in their relationship. At that moment, I pointed out to him that what he was showing me was his frustration and fist, not his headship. That in Scripture, the husband is the head and the wife is spoken of as the body, but any biblically functioning 'head' would have a happy 'body'. I said, for instance, if the body is cold, a good head will look at how to make it warm. If the body is hungry, a wise and godly head will look for food and nourishment. If the body is in danger, the head will look for a way to protect it.

Any 'body' who has such a loving, caring and compassionate 'authoritative head' will not want to be independent and unsubmitive to its care and leading.

Jesus Christ is that kind of Head for His body, His Church, and it's this kind of headship and authority that He wants us to exercise in every area of responsibility we have been given as leaders. May God help us to imitate His loving Headship well.

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