

The Church Is Losing Its Power Because of the Abuse of Authority

The church of Jesus Christ in the 21st century is losing its power to transform lives because of an infatuation with the spiritual and moral authority that pastors take over people. Authoritarianism in the church has become the biggest challenge Christians face in the 21st century. So-called “spiritual authority” in leaders who demand people submit to their will and ways in the name of God, is tearing at the fabric of legitimate New Covenant Christianity. Church leaders present themselves as the vicars of God, spokespersons for the Spirit of God, and the human embodiment of Divine truth. This fraudulent spiritual authority—the basis for Christian leaders “ruling over” other Christians—permeates evangelical churches.

Christians cross or go against this fraudulent spiritual authority at their peril.

Authoritarian leaders in the church have a unique form of punishment. One will never feel more isolated and alone than when a pastor calls down the wrath of God upon a church member who dares question his leadership.

The world has established systems of governance using imperial forms of authority, but the church is not supposed to imitate the world. We are to be in it, but not of it. Webster’s defines authority as “the power to influence thought, opinion, or behavior by convincing force or control.” Governments have authority. Kings have authority. Presidents have authority. Leadership in these systems of governance comes from those sitting in positions of authority.

The church of Jesus Christ was never designed to operate with authority over anyone. Jesus explicitly taught in Matthew **23:8-11** that the only person who rules over Christian communities is the Lord. He is our Teacher. He is our Leader. He is our Instructor. Under Him, we are all brothers. We are all equals.

Jesus told us that the world’s system of top-down governance should not exist among His people. Listen to our Lord’s words:

“Those who have recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord their positions over the people; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not to be this way among you, for whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant” (Mark 10:42-43).

Jesus often said to those who followed Him, “The greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). There was no emphasis in Jesus’ teaching or the New Testament letters on any alleged authority that is derived from any “office” or position.

Let me repeat that: ***Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that a Christian, because of title or position, has moral authority over another Christian.***

There is no “office of authority” or position of authority in the body of Christ like there is an office of President of the United States. Christ alone has and holds the only position of authority within His Church, and He has no vicar on earth but His Spirit, who resides in the life of every believer.

Christians are to serve others, and any leadership of any Christian gathering flows from this selfless service. Pagans seek offices that grant authority so that their leadership (lordship) over other people is inherent to their positions or titles.

Christians are to persuade others about morality by our love and grace; pagans morally coerce others by their positions of authority.

When Christians act like pagans, we turn our homes, churches, and organizations into structures of authority where everybody is coerced to submit to another person's authority, and the control of a person extends from someone else in a higher "position" of authority rather than Jesus Christ.

The equality of New Covenant believers in Christ is lost because Old Covenant Levitical forms of authority are imposed on Christian ministry.

How does one know if the Christian community, church or family to which he or she belongs is following Christ's teachings on leadership or is a reflection of the pagan's understanding of authority? What are the signs of imperial authoritarianism in the church?

The following are ten indicators of Fraudulent Authority within Christian organizations and churches.

1. There is never any freedom to question leaders.
2. Leaders often make claims of having special insights from God, insights that others are unable to possess.
3. Disagreements with leaders are deemed as signs of the devil's influence in one's life.
4. Events are designed to bring attention and praise to leaders rather than equipping others to do the work of the ministry.
5. Any concept of equality is immediately labeled rebellion or the result of "liberal" denials of the Bible.
6. Authoritarian leaders are only comfortable around like-minded leaders; thus, there is an unofficial "speaking tour" where only imperial, authoritarian leaders share the platform with each other.
7. The measure of success becomes the number of people who follow the leader ("It must be of God! Look at how many come to hear me speak!")
8. If a person leaves the community or church, the problem is always in the person who leaves, not the leadership.
9. Leaders who wrongly perceive themselves as those "with authority" insulate their lives by demanding absolute loyalty by giving large financial benefits to their closest "advisors."
10. The ultimate end of this kind of Christian leadership is always more; more money, more power, more, more, more.

The people of Christ are beginning to awaken to abuses of authority in the modern church and home.