

# *four postures of* **Spiritual** **Authority**

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**E**verywhere you look today the hot button is leadership. Yet, the essence of leadership is not found in expertise, knowledge, or personality. At the core, leadership is influence.

Like the wake behind a large boat, lasting influence is what a leader leaves behind.

True influence flows out of spiritual authority.

Spiritual authority is that quality found in leaders who speak with an authority beyond themselves. It is what some might call God's anointing. It comes from the unmistakable presence of God in a person's life. It is the fragrance of Jesus. It is what those who heard Jesus teach experienced when they, "were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matt. 7:<sup>28-29</sup>) Spiritual authority is what moved the Sanhedrin when they listened to Peter and John: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:<sup>13</sup>)

Spiritual authority is not something we can generate on our own, but something God grants. However, in a classic kingdom paradox, the development of spiritual authority is something we also participate in. The posture of our lives determines whether or not we are in position to receive the spiritual authority God desires to develop in us. In many ways it is part of the "inside-out" counter-intuitive nature of the kingdom.

The question is, what are the postures of a man or woman who is developing genuine spiritual authority? There are at least four.

Be warned each of these four postures runs in direct opposition to that which comes “naturally” for most leaders. And in every case, it is easy to minimize our personal tendencies rather than pay the price to cultivate these attitudes.

### *the posture of* **Surrender**

- The posture of surrender confronts our desire to be in control and our fear of releasing control.
- Surrender is about who reigns and about our willingness to trust the King.
- Surrender is at the heart of the familiar question, who sits on the throne of my life?
- It is not a once for all decision, but the ongoing experience of yielding more and more of the territory of my life to the Lord of my life.
- The challenge of surrender means admitting that just like Adam in the garden, my deepest desire is to be like God, to be the ruler of my own domain.
- The core question of Surrender is, “*Who is in control?*”

### *the posture of* **Alignment**

- The posture of alignment confronts the fact that we love our own ideas, we love to do things our own way.
- After surrendering control and our rights to our plans, our challenge is to align ourselves with His plans.
- We love to make plans, devise schemes, and then ask God to bless them.
- Sometimes, we present our plans to God, invite him to share his thoughts with us and then act as if it is time to negotiate. (Which in reality means asking the King of the universe to compromise his plans by adopting ours.)
- When we act this way we are in effect saying to God, “Follow me.”
- The challenge of alignment means admitting that I really do believe my ideas can accomplish kingdom work. That in my heart of hearts, I really do want to do God’s work *my way*.
- The core question of Alignment is, “*Who follows who?*”

### *the posture of* **Brokenness**

- The posture of brokenness confronts our reliance on expertise.
- Brokenness is the process of separating us from our dependence on experiences, skills, giftedness, competencies, plans, manuals, programs, etc.
- It is like Peter and John in Acts 3, learning that the needs of people go beyond the silver and gold they seek from us which feels so good to give.

- A broken leader is one that has been released from dependence on giftedness and competency to minister in absolute dependence on the work of God for anything of significance.
- Brokenness empowers us to utilize our skills and expertise without believing that our influence comes from them.
- It is the upside down message of Paul throughout 1 and 2 Corinthians. “We preach a gospel of foolishness... We have this treasure in jars of clay (chamber pots)... So that I might know that it is His all-surpassing power... So that His power might be seen in my weakness.”
- It is about freedom from the need to be known “for my stuff.”
- The challenge of brokenness means admitting that I want people to be impressed with me, that I would rather deliver ministry from a posture of positional and experiential authority.
- The core question of brokenness is, “*What do I rely on?* What do I bring to the table—expertise or desperate dependence?”

### *the posture of* **Vulnerability**

- The posture of vulnerability confronts my desire to avoid being needy.
- Vulnerability admits that I need those I am here to serve.
- It is the demonstration that I am not someone who has arrived at or has mastered life. I am a servant in dependence and partnership with Jesus.
- Transparency is the process of letting people peek into my life; it is letting them hear about my weaknesses and needs.
- Vulnerability is more than transparency; it is the willingness to let these same people minister to me at those points of weakness and need.
- Transparency says, I understand, I am like you.
- Vulnerability says, I need you... probably more than you need me.
- The challenge of vulnerability is admitting that I have needs *and* then releasing the last vestiges of my desire to impress people. It is about confronting the sin-based lie that pretends ministry flows out of what I do.
- The core question of vulnerability is, “*Will I admit I need You?* Will I choose distance (sanitary and safe,) or choose relationship? Will I allow people into the process of God’s work in my life?”

## **The Point**

These four postures open the door for the building of spiritual authority into our lives. Leaders willing to assume these postures begin to lead with influence that flows out of being rather than expertise or position.

In a world that is saturated with the superficiality of manipulative advertising and the weariness of overly programmed lives, people are crying out for leaders who will live and lead with true authority. The question is, will we be those leaders who operate from a base of spiritual authority?

**Ask Yourself**

- Which of these four postures is the hardest for you?
- What has God been doing in your life recently to address it? That is, what people, circumstances, or events has he allowed into your life to develop this posture and how have are you responding to his processing?

