

## **Appealing to Authority** - (the proper way to approach a leader when they are wrong)

Author Watchman Nee says: God upholds the whole universe with his authority so he joins his children together through his authority. If any one of his children is independent and self reliant (not subject to Gods delegated authority) then that one can never accomplish the work of God on Earth. He gives these requirements for spiritual authority:

(in the book titled SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY)

1. He must be under authority
2. He must acknowledge where authority comes from
3. He must deny himself
4. He must stay in constant fellowship with the Lord
5. He must never establish his own authority
6. He must not listen to slanderous words and opposition
7. He must not defend himself
8. He must have revelation
9. He must not judge people
10. He must exhort and restore
11. He must be a servant

1. Obedience is related to conduct... It is relative (conditional) subjective
2. Submission is related to a heart attitude. It is absolute, objective
3. God alone receives unqualified obedience without measure
4. Any person lower than God can only receive qualified obedience
5. We are never justified in rebellion. We must instead submit to a higher authority.  
(If an earthly authority is in conflict with God, We submit to God)

AC 5:29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!

Examples:

- A. Daniel's friends refused to bow to king Nebuchadnezzar
- B. Daniel prayed to God to spite of the law
- C. Peter and Paul were imprisoned for preaching the gospel

## **How to appeal to one in authority...**

Appeal - An earnest or urgent request, entreaty, or supplication - A resort or application to a higher authority as for sanction, corroboration or decision

- The transfer of a case from a lower court to a higher court

MT 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. [16] But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that `every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' [17] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

AC 25:10 Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. [11] If, however, I am

guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!" After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!" [21] When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself." He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him."

**Determine the issue:**

1. Moral or legal
2. Biblical
3. Ethical
4. Personal \* (most power struggles and conflicts of interest come about in this arena. If our problem with compliance is over personal preferences, we put ourselves at the threshold of sinning.

**Determine who is affected:**

1. Just you
2. A group of people (are YOU responsible to protect and provide for these people?)

**What needs to happen:**

1. Change of heart
  2. Change of course
  3. Change of leadership
- \* you must have a clear expectation, a complaint without a solution is not Godly

**What to do:**

1. Pray for the person in Authority
  2. Pray for your attitude
  3. Pray about your motives
  4. Appeal to them privately at the right time
- \* if your appeal is rejected...
5. Bring a witness to appeal with you
  6. Stay in the right spirit if your appeal is rejected
  7. Wait for God to vindicate the truth, be patient, trust
- Do not confuse passive behavior with humility , meekness, or submission. This is not a Godly response to Authority.

Passive - overtly compliant./ inert., useless, . Not participating, acting, or operating; / to shut down mentally, emotionally, or physically to be a carpet, or "wet noodle"

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**Misbelief by those in Submission:**

1. My opinion doesn't matter, so I should keep it to myself.
2. I must always agree with my leader in order to submit to them
3. I only have to do what I'm told to. should set around and wait for orders.
4. I am usually less intelligent, qualified or experienced than the one in authority over me
5. I should seek out a third party's biased opinion when I don't agree.
6. I should not dream, plan, or prepare if my ideas might get shot down anyway
7. I have no responsibility if I didn't make the decision.

### **Misbelief by those in Authority:**

1. I should never seek or consider others' opinions
2. I can lay aside responsibility when I choose.
3. If I am in charge, I am not accountable to my subjects.
4. When I delegate, I can walk away or wash my hands of any responsibility
5. When I delegate, I should always impose my opinions and personal preferences.

### **Abuse of Authority...**

There is no doubt that Authority in every arena has suffered abuse. Dictators of governments practice ethnic cleansing, police brutality and fathers who molest children are just a few examples. So how can we submit to or respect the authority who abuses their position? We must not confuse the office with the person in the office. Consider these biblical examples of response to errors of those in authority.

1. Did Absalom have justification to resent his father David ? Did Absalom follow God's order to reconcile?
2. Did Noah give Ham reason to disrespect him? Did Ham honor his father's authority?
3. Was Miriam and Aaron wrongly accusing Moses? Did their behavior bring about consequences?
4. When we see authorities in error, should we pray for them? Should we go to them privately?
5. Did Nathan follow God's order to confront David?
6. Did Ester appeal wisely to the King?
7. Did Nehemiah appeal wisely to the King?
8. Can we do the right thing the wrong way?
9. Are there consequences for going around God's order?
10. Who's job is it to remove abusive authorities?
11. Did Jesus ever recognize the authority of the Pharisees?
12. Did the Pharisees ever question Jesus authority?
13. When the authorities arrested Jesus, did Peter understand who was really in control?

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. One day, after a busy morning chasing votes (and no lunch) he arrived at a church barbecue. It was late afternoon and Herter was famished.

As Herter moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line. "Excuse me," Governor Herter said, "do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?" "Sorry," the woman told him. "I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person." "But I'm starved," the governor said. "Sorry," the woman said again. "Only one to a customer."

Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man , but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around. "Do you know who I am?" he said, "I am the governor of this state." "Do you know who I am?" the woman said, "I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister."

## **Biblical examples of appeals -**

11 Then he appointed Amariah the High Priest to be the court of final appeal in cases involving violation of sacred affairs; and Zebadiah (son of Ishmael), a ruler in Judah, as the court of final appeal in all civil cases; with the Levites as their assistants. "Be fearless in your stand for truth and honesty. And may God use you to defend the innocent," was his final word to them.  
2 Chron 19:11 (Living) \_\_\_\_\_

3 A widow of that city came to him frequently to appeal for justice against a man who had harmed her.<sup>4,5</sup> The judge ignored her for a while, but eventually she got on his nerves. " 'I fear neither God nor man,' he said to himself, 'but this woman bothers me. I'm going to see that she gets justice, for she is wearing me out with her constant coming!' "6 Then the Lord said, "If even an evil judge can be worn down like that,<sup>7</sup> don't you think that God will surely give justice to his people who plead with him day and night? Luke 18:3-7 (Living)

17 Listen closely to what I am about to say. Hear me out.

18 "This is my case: I know that I am righteous.

19 Who can argue with me over this? If you could prove me wrong, I would stop defending myself and die. Job 13:17-19 (Living)

20 My friends scoff at me, but I pour out my tears to God,

21 pleading that he will listen as a man would listen to his neighbor. Job 16:20-21 (Living)

29 So God heeded Abraham's plea and kept Lot safe, removing him from the maelstrom of death that engulfed the cities.

Gen 19:29 (Living)

18,19 But because you were sorry and concerned and humbled yourself before the Lord when you read the book and its warnings that this land would be cursed and become desolate, and because you have torn your clothing and wept before me in contrition, I will listen to your plea.  
2 Kings 22:18 (Living) \_\_\_\_\_

14 So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel and 70,000 men died as a result.<sup>15</sup> During the plague God sent an Angel to destroy Jerusalem; but then he felt such compassion that he changed his mind and commanded the destroying Angel, "Stop! It is enough!" 16 When David saw the Angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth with his sword drawn, pointing toward Jerusalem, he and the elders of Israel clothed themselves in sackcloth and fell to the ground before the Lord.<sup>17</sup> And David said to God, "I am the one who sinned by ordering the census. But what have these sheep done? O Lord my God, destroy me and my family, but do not destroy your people."<sup>27</sup> Then the Lord commanded the Angel to put back his sword into its sheath;<sup>28</sup> and when David saw that the Lord had answered his plea, he sacrificed to him again.  
1 Chron 21:14-28 (Living) \_\_\_\_\_

10 Warnings from the Lord were ignored by both Manasseh and his people.11 So God sent the Assyrian armies, and they seized him with hooks and bound him with bronze chains and carted him away to Babylon.12 Then at last he came to his senses and cried out humbly to God for help.13 And the Lord listened and answered his plea by returning him to Jerusalem and to his kingdom! 2 Chron 33:10-13 (Living)

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## **REJECTED APPEALS**

23-25 "At that time I(MOSES)made this plea to God:'O Lord God,please let me cross over into the Promised Land--the good land beyond the Jordan River with its rolling hills--and Lebanon. I want to see the result of all the greatness and power you have been showing us; for what God in all of heaven or earth can do what you have done for us?'

26 "But the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not let me cross over. 'Speak of it no more,' he ordered, Deut 3:23-26 (Living)

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16 David begged him to spare the child and went without food, and lay all night before the Lord on the bare earth. 17 The leaders of the nation pleaded with him to get up and eat with them, but he refused.18 Then, on the seventh day, the baby died. 2 Sam 12:16-18 (Living)

## **When should we appeal to an authority?**

1. When we are asked to do evil
2. When our authority is about to do evil

## **How should we appeal?**

1. We must be in right standing
  - a. be under authority
  - b. not have a history of complaining
  - c. confess any wrongdoing on your part
2. We must have the right motives
  - a. manipulation is evil
  - b. what is best for everyone, not just me
  - c. how will this benefit my leader
3. At the right time
  - a. privately— never before an audience
  - b. without other distractions
  - c. wait till your leader is receptive
4. Give accurate facts and information
  - a. don't leave out important details
  - b. include alternate perceptions of the situation
5. With the right attitude
  - a. a bad attitude can mask the facts
  - b. an angry disposition does not help
  - c. communicate loyalty, and gratefulness regardless of the outcome

6. With appropriately selected words
  - a. avoid inflammatory remarks that cause unnecessary reactions
  - b. separate personal opinion from the facts
  - c. never challenge authority
  
7. Have the right response if it's rejected
  - a. Being Godly is more important than being right
  - b. a right spirit will validate the issue
  - c. a wrong spirit will ruin your witness and the outcome

**APPEALING TO AUTHORITY :**

Biblical examples:

Nehemiah— asked the king for permission to rebuild	Neh. 2:3-8
Joseph—regained his honor and freedom after waiting 12 years	Gen. 40:14,15
Ruth—won the heart of her mother in law and the hand of a life partner	Ruth 1:16,17
Esther—saved the nation of Israel	Esther 4:16
Daniel—was able to obey God	Dan 2:14-16
Moses—saved the nation of Israel	Ex 32:11,14
Prodigal son—restored his place in the family and saved from starvation	Luke 15:18-21
Jacob—life was spared from his older brothers wrath	Gen 33:3,4
Balaam's donkey—spared him from an angel of death	Num 22:28-31
Nathan—asked the king to consider his actions	2 Sam 12:1-13
Paul—asked the courts to weigh his right to testify	Acts 25:10-12
David—asked the king if he could defend the nations honor	1 Sam 17:32-37
Joab—asked David not to mourn Absalom , he spared an uprising	2 Sam. 19:1-8