



Authority in Leadership Spiritual Leadership vs. Hierarchy As seen in the Leadership Letters of 1st & 2nd Timothy and Titus

When it comes to defining authority in the leadership of the Church, 1850 years since the time of the apostles has left us with a hodge-podge of ideas, false doctrines, traditions of the elders, and confusion. It is the goal of this study to explore some of the resolutions and distinctions between the two opposing understandings of Church Leadership.

While the traditional Church has been conditioned to accept and promote Hierarchy, it would be a gross overstatement to say that in every Church where Hierarchical authority exists that every aberration of hierarchical leadership exists. Many “pastors” in Hierarchically structured Churches manifest true spiritual leadership mixed with false human control oriented leadership. It would be a contradiction in terms to believe that a leader in an hierarchical system could function in pure spiritual leadership, otherwise they wouldn’t be involved in an hierarchical government structure, but it would be just as wrong to say that every hierarchical leader manifested all of the negative hierarchical traits and none of the truly spiritual traits. Mixture is the bane of the Hierarchical Church. It would also be incorrect to conclude that all those who manifest a hierarchical concept of leadership do so from false motivations, or are abusive to the flocks they oversee. Many are good and godly brethren who simply lack the revelation of purer forms of leadership.

I make no apology for the clear and obvious repetition of principles and truths, expressed in the development of this article. In fact, I have purposely included the repetition, based on the many passages that reiterate and emphasize the same truths regarding leadership, over and over again, so as to make evident the clear and emphatic teaching in the New Covenant, on true spiritual leadership.

We must always be guided by Jesus’ words in Matthew 20:25-28

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27“And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— 28“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Spiritual Leadership	Hierarchy
<p>Basic Definition: Spiritual leadership is a leadership based on divine commissioning, gifting, godly character, biblical understanding, and spiritual maturity. It leads by accurately communicating the mind of Christ, and does not rely upon title, position, manipulation, coercion, intimidation, threats, or political maneuvering. It communicates the Word of Christ.</p>	<p>Basic Definition: A form of leadership that at its foundation level seeks to control and, at times dominate the flock, by means of title, position, manipulation, coercion, intimidation, threats, and political posturing. It's concept of leadership functions in the approach of a corporate business model of management, goal setting, administration, and policies. It rules via title and position, rather than Jesus' Word alone.</p>
<p>It "charges" in the area of sound doctrine. Charge, Grk. parangello = to give orders, to command. <i>1 Timothy 1:3,4</i> <i>3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.</i> The content of the orders or commands are not human preferences, or commands based in position, but commanding that which Jesus is Himself commanding. It is simply putting human form to divine commands.</p>	<p>Hierarchy would take this passage and use it to further their policies, agendas, and personal will, without being able to clearly trace those things to clear biblical precedent or a fresh Word from the Lord, which would be confirmed by the other mature brethren and prophets of the assembly.</p>
<p>It is based on being called to "the ministry" and being "faithful" to that calling. The focus is on divine calling rather than human appointment. He is a minister because of his calling, which is neither supported or diminished by human recognition or the lack of it. It has nothing to do with a title or position. <i>1 Timothy 1:12</i> <i>12And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry</i></p>	<p>Hierarchy is less focused on divine calling, and is more focused on education, political maneuvering, intellect, charisma and the ability to sway public opinion. It is less focused on divine calling, and looks to human appointment. He is only "a minister" when he carries the title and holds a position. Rather than it being based on faithfulness and issues of maturity and character, it tends to be based on superiors granting position and title.</p>
<p>Translators wrongly translate 1 Timothy 3:1 "position/office." There is no word for "position/office" in the Greek. The emphasis is on the "work" of oversight, not a position. Work vs Position. <i>1 Timothy 3:1</i> <i>1This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.</i> <i>Literal translation: This is a faithful saying: If a man desires oversight work, he desires a good work.</i></p>	<p>Hierarchical interpreters have falsely interpreted this passage due to Catholic and flesh oriented tradition. Hierarchy tends towards seeking to derive authority from position rather than true spiritual work and authority. The reality is that there is no "position," but there is a lot of thankless work, being a demonic target, having to bear the cross first, and going ahead of the flock to take the first hits of attack, as they break the way ahead of the flock for the flock to enter into green pastures and cool waters.</p>
<p>He must be a man of character and integrity. <i>1 Timothy 3:1-7</i> It is clear that position has nothing to do with this role. Functions of character, wisdom, grace, and maturity are in the front seat, and this car has no back seat of position and control. The only control here is the control of the Holy Spirit through His transmitted Word.</p>	<p>Hierarchical concepts of authority, due to being more "control" in orientation, than "character" in orientation, often fails to see its abusive treatment of the body, and calls it by other terms, rather than recognizing it for the lack of character it is really manifesting. Because position factors so highly here character ends up taking a back seat.</p>
<p>Instruction is a hallmark of spiritual oversight. <i>1 Timothy 4:6</i> <i>6If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.</i></p>	<p>Hierarchy, while it provides "instruction" tends to have a hidden agenda in that instruction. I feed you so you have to pay me. I instruct you therefore you have to obey me. The emphasis on instruction, in hierarchical thinking, is on obedience to the instructor, rather than obedience to the Word.</p>

<p>Command and Teach. <i>1 Timothy 4:11</i> <i>11 These things command and teach.</i> What things? Their own opinion? No! Their preferences? No! Their personal agenda? No! The true words of God's wisdom. Their commanding and teaching is limited to this sphere alone. Who cares what their opinion is? Leaders may express their opinion but they can't command it.</p>	<p>Hierarchy commands and teaches mixture. Some solid biblical truth, and some opinion and personal preference. To teach opinion, personal agenda, and personal preference with the same degree of authority as the Word of God is a gross violation of biblical authority. Hierarchy greatly struggles keeping these distinctions clear, because their positions lend themselves to such violations.</p>
<p>Give attention to... <i>1 Timothy 4:13</i> <i>13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.</i> Notice the focus. It is not to goal setting, vision casting, building buildings, creating ministry projects, administrating programs, having staff meetings, hiring and firing staff, creating Church budgets, etc. They are to "Give Attention" to the spiritual well being of the Church, not develop a highly structured corporation that requires intense management and administration skills and creativity. They see their chief role is to spiritually nourish the flock. This is the precedent the apostles set in the beginning and it continues to permeate the Church. When leaders "give attention" to what they should give attention to then the body is healthy, protected, and blessed. When they don't then the body is weak and emaciated and the leaders will burn out.</p>	<p>Hierarchical approaches focus on goal setting, vision casting, building buildings, creating ministry projects, administrating programs, having staff meetings, hiring and firing staff, creating Church budgets, etc. They find it extremely hard to find time for prayer, fasting, study of the Scripture. While they do teach, they are bogged down with so much other stuff that it is inaccurate to say that they "Give Attention," to the areas Paul mentions. They just don't have time to. Spiritual priorities get lost in administrative chores.</p>
<p>Don't neglect...meditate on...give yourself entirely to...take heed to...continue in... <i>1 Timothy 4:14-16</i> <i>14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.</i> It is clear that the overseers role is a spiritual one, rather than administrative one. He stays focused on developing deep spiritual understandings for the flock, rather than getting side tracked by other issues and concerns.</p>	<p>Hierarchy finds it very hard to stay this focused. With all the other things that define hierarchical Churches, leaders hardly have time to fulfill Paul's words here. The bigger they grow the harder it is. They continually live with a guilt in this area. Research poll after poll tells us most hierarchical pastors are driven by the administrative details of their Churches and hardly have time to devote themselves to what they know they are really called to. The machine of the traditional Church gobbles up their spirituality and spits out burned out leaders, and malnourished flocks.</p>
<p>Sensitive and honoring authority. <i>1 Timothy 5:</i> <i>1 Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.</i> Notice the emphasis on "family" rather than "people on the Church role."</p>	<p>Hierarchy can all too easily become overly enamored with its power of position, and can tread heavily upon all classes of individuals in their Churches. This is why so many folks end up leaving the traditional Church, because of abuse and disrespect. People in the Church can too easily be seen as tithe checks, program facilitators, and numbers on the Church role, rather than as family members.</p>

<p>Integrity and an honor towards spiritual authority. <i>1 Timothy 5:21</i> <i>21I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.</i> Paul calls Timothy to honor him just like he wants the flock to honor Timothy. Everything hinges on integrity. Because no salaries, positions, and titles are at stake here, they speak what Jesus tells them to speak, knowing that what is at stake is not their salary but their flock's maturity. When the flock fails to honor its spiritual leadership as representatives of Christ they show their direct dishonor of Jesus Himself.</p>	<p>Hierarchy tends to show partiality, because they cling so tightly to their positions, titles, and salaries, that those who support their agendas and policies the most strongly get the preferential treatment. Pastors, whose salaries are based on a happy flock and solid numbers fear speaking the strong truths they need to speak because of the possibility of members leaving and taking their tithes with them.</p>
<p>They are to teach and exhort. <i>1 Timothy 6:1c</i> <i>...Teach and exhort these things.</i> The flock is called to respond to and receive the teaching and exhortations from their leadership. Arguing, contradicting, and disputing is only allowed by Christ in His Churches, when the shepherds express too strongly their own personal opinions. When the Word of the Lord comes forth all arguments are to cease. Shepherds are not allowed to express authoritatively their opinion or ideas.</p>	<p>Hierarchy tends to teach and control. Because the flock is often not taught the importance of submission to the Word of Christ that comes through the pastor, the flock learns to argue, wrangle, jockey, and thrust forth their opinion. Church was not designed as a place for the strongest opinion ruling. It was designed to hear and submit to the Word of the Lord. All too often opinions and ideas rule here, and where it does confusion and disorder is not far behind. All too often this causes acute anxiety to support leaders, who are not heard because they aren't the Senior Pastor.</p>
<p>Notice the emphasis of what is to be obeyed, and how to deal with those who don't respect the authority of Jesus in the words of their leadership. <i>1 Timothy 6:3-5</i> <i>3If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth... From such withdraw yourself.</i> Paul's words are interestingly strong. While hierarchy is no where evident, the absence of hierarchy does not mean the absence of decisive judgment and censure. The issue here is disobedience to the words of Jesus, rather than the positional authority of the leader or his opinion or policy.</p>	<p>Hierarchy often fails at just this place. While they can tend to be strong and authoritative, it is as much based on the requirement to adhere to their policies and agendas as much as the Word of Jesus. This is a completely faulty concept of Church leadership. Hierarchy has no authority to establish Church policy or agenda. To do so always ends up usurping the rightful authority of Jesus by making the pastor's agenda on equal footing with the Word of Christ. Such approach only evidences the confusion of mixture that prevails in the traditional Church. To place the pastor's personal opinion on equal authority with the words of Jesus is wrong at the least and an abomination at the worst. It fails to acknowledge the potential of His Word in the mouths and hearts of those they pastor.</p>
<p>Paul calls Timothy to keep the commandments he issues, because they aren't his personal commandments, but in truth the commandments of Christ as given by Christ through Paul. <i>1 Timothy 6:11-16</i> <i>11But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.</i></p>	<p>Hierarchy must learn to distinguish its policies from the commandments of Christ. Paul never set up personal policies, which would just confuse the people. He kept things clean and clear by sticking to an authority that was based in the Word of Jesus alone. Hierarchical leaders have no right to canonize their ideas. There is no such thing as the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession, but even if there was, it still wouldn't give them the right to operate in Christ's behalf, apart from a clear Word from Christ. Paul didn't act like the Pope. He didn't canonize his own opinions. He listened to Jesus and spoke what he heard, with all authority and power, backed up by signs, wonders, and miracles.</p>

<p>Command. What? Personal opinion? No! The Word of Christ. 1 Timothy 6:17 <i>17Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.</i> True authoritative leadership exists in biblical Church, and they are called to command the flock, but such commands are to be the Word of Christ alone. The flock must learn to submit to this Word when delivered through their leaders lest they resist the authority of Christ in their midst. His authority flows through human leaders, when those leaders speak His Word.</p>	<p>Hierarchy loves to command. It can easily become drunk on its own authority. All too often pastors in traditional Churches will tell their staff “Unless you can submit to all of my policies, my agenda, my staff requirements, you can’t retain your position, continue your ministry, or receive your salary.” Such use of authority has caused the body of Christ to tend to reject all authority, and can no longer discern true biblical authority. Leaders who fail to speak the Word of Christ have absolutely no authority over the body of Christ, though they imply they do. Any other form of authority is a usurpation of the authority of Jesus. Any kind of hiring and firing environment violates the entire principle of spiritual ministry and turns it into business as ministry.</p>
<p>Charge them... 2 Timothy 1:14 <i>14Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.</i> Notice Paul’s words “Charge them before the Lord.” If a leader can’t charge the flock, with the thought that if Jesus were standing right next to him, listening to his charge, and approving of his charge, then he has no business making it. He is not allowed to charge the flock apart from such confidence. His authority rests in this confidence.</p>	<p>Hierarchy all too often fails this test. There is a failure to be certain that none of their charges are based in opinion, preference, and the flesh. Charging must not rest upon title and position, but its being done “before the Lord.”</p>
<p>The authority of the Word and humility... 2 Timothy 2:24-26 <i>24And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.</i> While it is true the shepherd will be called to correct, it is not a correction based on title or position, but rather patience, humility, and loving concern. Corrections based on anger, coercion, expectation, and intimidation have no place in the life of a true shepherd.</p>	<p>Hierarchy has left a string of offenses down throughout Church history. Abuses of all kinds have come forth from hierarchical authority. The violation of this passage alone has all too often characterized Church leadership in the institutional Church and has left generations of believers abused and wounded, unable to trust and respect their leadership. There is no room for the “you do it because I command you to...” sort of authority, or “you submit to me because Jesus commands you to...” sort of thing. Such commands and such statements violate this passage and are true abuse of the body of Christ.</p>
<p>You must... Notice Paul isn’t afraid to use strong authoritative wording, but look at what he is strong about. It has nothing to do with personal opinion. 2 Timothy 3:14 <i>14But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,</i></p>	<p>Hierarchy has no permission to use such language for their policies and agendas. Indeed to even have policies and agendas to rule staff and ministry teams is without biblical precedent.</p>

<p>Scripture's authority is based on it reflecting Jesus "The Word," and leaders who communicate in Scriptural authority do so as they recognize that Scripture reflects Jesus' authority. Thus the authority is not in the servant, nor is it directly in the Scripture, but both the Scripture and the servant are reflective of the Word's authority and it is this that calls the body to obedience, through doctrine, reproof, correction, and instructions.</p> <p>2 Timothy 3:16-17 <i>16All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.</i> Spiritual authority is unafraid to communicate Jesus' authority through doctrine, reproof, correction, and instructions.</p>	<p>Hierarchy can't claim this level of authority. Their positions, agendas and policies are of a far lesser authority than anything found in Scripture, and certainly even farther removed from the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself. Until all leadership cast their personal authority to the ground, as utterly worthless in comparison to the authority of Jesus, they will never know what it means to move in spiritual authority, and the body will continue to be short changed.</p>
<p>Preach, convince, rebuke, exhort. 2 Timothy 4:2-4 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. Spiritual authority doesn't have the luxury of playing it comfortable. They "must" do the things that Paul speaks here, but they do so without any personal authority based in position and title. As they know what Christ wants said then they speak, and they do so authoritatively.</p>	<p>Hierarchy must be so careful here, because it is right at this point they are most likely to miss it. They are not allowed to exercise this level of authority based around their position, and to fly off the handle in rebukes and exhortations. Their title doesn't give them the authority to rip into people. Only as they reflect the Word of Christ can they function here.</p>
<p>How are the following verses accomplished? Titus 1:10-11 <i>10For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.</i> This is an important question, because the answer determines whether hierarchy is relied upon or true spiritual authority. Spiritual authority stops the mouths of the false teachers by speaking the truth in love, with all confidence in the authority of Christ. Since their authority does not rest in the agreement of the people with them, he is able to deliver the truth and then turn the people over to Jesus for whatever discipline they need if they reject the Word of Christ. If the body is in sufficient agreement with Jesus and His authority, as expressed through the servant of the Lord, then discipline in the body can take place through the body exercising that discipline. If the majority of the body fail to arise to agreement with Jesus, and the leader alone stands in that place of agreement with Jesus, then he can stand back and watch Jesus deal with the flock as He sees fit, and the servant is not overwhelmed with stress, nor does he use the mechanisms that hierarchy would be pressured to use to secure their will. Such peace!</p>	<p>Hierarchical authority uses position, salary, privilege, rank, and posturing to accomplish these verses. When a hierarchical pastor sees people whom he believes need to have their mouths stopped he feels a tight pinch. He sees "his authority" being challenged. He sees his ability to control things slipping unless he can get things back under his control. He sees his agenda threatened and his vision challenged. He's in trouble. But he's in trouble for reasons other than he thinks. He's in trouble because too much of what his ministry is all about is threatened by the disobedience of the flock. They can take away his role if he doesn't get things back under control again. This creates enormous stress upon these leaders and often kills all desire to continue in the ministry. Force, coercion, political posturing, intimidation, and threats are all used to achieve his will, and then both Jesus and the flock lose.</p>

<p>Let no one despise you. <i>Titus 2:15</i> 15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. Now this is a powerful verse. How does the minister avoid the despising of the people? By using ecclesiastical title and position to secure obedience? Nope! By a harsh and loud intimidating voice? Nope! By threats of “firing” or loss of position for those opposing? Nope! Just by speaking, out of the integrity of his heart the pure Word of Jesus, without fear and intimidation, without harshness and anger, in all patience and soundness of doctrine, giving room for Jesus to confirm His word with signs following. It is clear, from what Paul says here, that leaders are to be accorded a unique measure of spiritual honor due to their function in the body. Those who treat spiritual leadership in less than honorable ways will have the Lord Jesus Himself to give account to for this. Their honor does not come from their title or position, but in their divine commissioning and character.</p>	<p>Hierarchy is in real trouble here. Using position and title, as the primary means of securing this kind of respect is absolutely impossible. Using political polstering and posturing, through attempting to gain support from various influential types is pure deception. Threats of discipline and loss of position only make things worse. Only as pure love and pure truth are matched in sharing the true Word of Jesus, will such respect be obtained.</p>
<p>Reject the divisive... <i>Titus 3:10-11</i> 10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, 11knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. It may be that the body will resist the leaders rejections, especially if the one being rejected is a close friend of others, but if the leader simply does what Christ tells him to do, in time the body will learn by his example and from their entering into the Lord’s discipline on the one being rejected. In time the body will learn to trust their leader’s rejections, and find blessing for obeying Christ who has called the leader to reject the divisive one. The leader simply has to do what Jesus tells him to do, and leaves the outcomes to the Lord. If the body is flowing in harmony with Christ, then when the leader believes someone must be rejected the whole body rejects them and the offending brother is all the more quickly brought to repentance for the agreement of the body with the will of the Lord, which releases the Lord’s discipline upon the sinning brother.</p>	<p>Hierarchy have a particularly hard time doing this, because they’ve told themselves they have to get their way, as regards this difficult person. If the body won’t respect their opinion and decision regarding this person the hierarchical leader is left with the fear that he is losing respect and must do something to regain his concept of authority. He will attempt to gain support for his position and then attempt a coup by ordering the difficult person to leave the Church or firing them from staff. All such attempts are simply the evidence of weakness of divine power in their lives. Jesus doesn’t operate this way.</p>
<p>Let righteousness prevail... <i>Titus 3:4</i> 14And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. When spiritual leadership do their job then righteousness and good works prevail. There is peace in the body. True spiritual authority brings forth good works.</p>	<p>Hierarchy has a hard time “letting” anything happen. They wrestle with a tightness in their chest, feeling like they have to “make” good works come forth. The reality is that when true leadership is manifest the leader can step back and “let” good things happen. The stress is relieved and the responsibility for change is left with Jesus.</p>

As we conclude this brief study we can clearly see that Paul’s concept of spiritual authority is a very real authority. It is an authority based on relationship with Christ, and the reflecting of His mind and word. Those who attempt to create respect for authority by means of title, position, or intimidation, will find the Spirit of Jesus opposing them, and stress overcoming their lives. We need spiritual leadership!

Biblical Church, while not employing an hierarchical approach, need not lack true authoritative pastoral oversight, but they will not be an authoritarian leadership. One looks to Jesus for their authority, and the other looks to title and position. One reflects Jesus’ authority into the flock, and the other lord’s it over His heritage.

May we learn to lead spiritually and appreciate those who do.