



# 4 Postures of

# *Spiritual Authority*



## Four Postures of

# Spiritual Authority

by Gary Mayes, D.Min,  
Exec. Dir. of ChurchNEXT

Our culture venerates hard-charging visionary leaders. We are fascinated by the likes of Steve Jobs who power through uncharted waters with uncanny intuition or those with down-to-earth genius like Warren Buffet. Yet, the essence of leadership is not found in expertise, knowledge, or personality. At the core, real leadership is all about influence.

Like the growing wake behind a large speed boat, lasting influence is the legacy trailing behind a leader.

And, true influence flows out of spiritual authority.

Spiritual authority is that quality found in leaders who speak with a gravitas far beyond themselves. It is what some would call God's anointing. 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. 7:28-29)

Spiritual authority is what moved the Sanhedrin as 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 4:13)

Spiritual authority is not something we generate on our own, but something God grants. It flows from the unmistakable presence of God in a person's life. It is the fragrance of Jesus himself. And yet, in a classic kingdom paradox, we also participate in the development of our spiritual authority. The posture of our lives determines whether or not we are positioned to receive the spiritual authority God desires to exercise through us. In many ways, it is part of the inside-out counter-intuitive nature of the kingdom.

All of this means that the real question is, how do we actually live



available to receive the spiritual authority God would like to pour out over us? What do the postures of a man or woman who is in that position look like?

I've identified these as the postures of spiritual authority. There are at least four of them.

What makes these postures so significant is that each one demands deepening dependence on the active rule and reign of God. Each one pries the fingers of our death grip further away from the joystick of control. Individually and collectively they place us more deeply into the hands of the one who is our rock and our defender.

First, however, a word of caution. Each of these four postures runs against the grain of that which comes naturally for most of us. Each one confronts fundamental aspects of our sin nature. They press us to swim upstream against the current of cultural notions regarding leadership. In every case, it is easy to lie to ourselves minimizing our personal tendencies, rather than pay the price of cultivating a counter-culture way of life.

## #1) THE POSTURE OF **SURRENDER**

Surrender is all about giving up the reigns of authority over our lives, our plans, and our destiny. It means submitting to the absolute authority of him who sits on the throne and choosing to trust him completely.

- The posture of surrender confronts our bias to find security in being in charge. It arrests the belief that we are safe when we call the shots.
- It is not a once-for-all decision, but a continual peeling back of the onion to yield more and more of the authority over my life to the Lord of my life.
- It forces me to face my fear of not holding the reins myself.
- In contrast, looks like Jesus who surrendered daily to the assignments and authority of the Father. (Jn 5.19)
- It demands that I admit that just like Adam my deepest desire is to be the ruler of my own domain.
- The core question of surrender is, "Will I trust him enough to give him the right to complete control?"



## # 2) THE POSTURE OF **ALIGNMENT**

Alignment is about conforming specific priorities, plans, purposes, and even the schedule of our lives to His agenda.

- The posture of alignment confronts the fact that we love our own ideas. We love to do things our own way. In our hearts, we would prefer a world where we make our plans then bring to God where He would bless them.
- Alignment does not mean that my priorities we would do things God's way if he would just compromise a bit. Negotiating with the perfect king of the univers is tantamount to saying, "Follow me, I have a better way."
- Do we really think we have a better idea?
- In contrast, alignment looks like Jesus who said he does nothing of his own accord, but only what "he sees his Father doing." (John 5:19)
- Alignment challenges me to admit that deep down I really do believe my own ideas and my own efforts can accomplish the work of the kingdom.
- The core question of Alignment is, "Who follows whom?"

## # 3) THE POSTURE OF **BROKENNESS**

Brokenness is the painful process of separating us from our reliance on experience, education, skills, giftedness, curriculums, familiar technologies, etc. It interrupts our desire for people to be impressed with us and makes us desperate for them to see Jesus instead.

- The posture of brokenness confronts our reliance on expertise. It leaves us no longer impressed by our resume.
- It is Peter and John in Acts 3, admitting that silver or gold we don't have and what others need only Jesus provides.
- Brokenness is the "don't be impressed with me" message of Paul throughout 1 and 2 Corinthians when he said, "We preach a gospel of foolishness... We have this treasure in (cheap) jars of clay... It is His all-surpassing power... So that His power might be seen in my weakness."



- In contrast to dependence our stuff, brokenness creates the freedom to pick up and put down our tools without ever believing they were the key to impact.
- Brokenness challenges us to let go of the need to be known for “the great stuff we can do.”
- The core question of brokenness is, “What will we bring to the table, expertise or desperate dependence?”

#### #4) THE POSTURE OF **VULNERABILITY**

Vulnerability means letting people see what is still messy, unfinished, even uncertain. We are vulnerable because we cannot control how what they will think of us or how they will treat us as a result.

- The posture of vulnerability confronts our desire to manage what other people think of us. It means choosing to expose the truth of our journey while it is unfinished.
- Vulnerability reveals that we are needy when we don't know how others will respond to that self-revelation.
- It was Jesus asking his disciples to be with him in the garden while he wept and prayed and wrestled with his desire for a “different way.” (Mt. 26.36-46)
- Transparency says we understand, we have been there. Vulnerability reveals, “here is where I am now” and it isn't always pretty.
- In contrast to the transparent look at our story after it has found resolution, vulnerability lets others see the raw unfinished stuff in our lives while the outcome is unknown.
- Vulnerability challenges us to live authentically, with no mask, so the people of our lives see the real stuff of our true selves in its raw state.
- The core question of vulnerability is, “Will I let people see the raw stuff of my life and trust God's ability to manage my reputation?”

## THE POINT

These four postures position leaders for the release of spiritual authority because they position God to shine through us in real



time. They put us in a position where we discover that “this all-surpassing power is from God.” (2 Cor 4.7) In these postures we find, “my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.” (2 Cor 12.9)

Leaders willing to move forward in these postures discover an impact on others that goes unexplainably beyond the transactional content of a moment. They discover the anointing of God that leads to lasting influence.

I would submit that the world is desperately seeking for leaders like this. While our world is saturated with the superficiality of manipulative advertising and overly managed messaging, people are starving for the leaders who are the real deal. The question is, will we be those leaders?

## TAKING IT PERSONALLY...

- Which of these four postures is the most challenging for you? And, why do you think that is?
- What's God been doing in your life recently to go after it?
- Is there a context or a relationship where you might step it up in an effort to move more deeply toward one of these postures? Describe it and what you'll try.