

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

WHEN FAITH GETS LOST
THE ABUSIVE SIDE OF POWER
JANUARY 17-23, 2016



SERMON OUTLINE

When Faith Gets Lost: The Abusive Side of Power
1 Kings 16 & 21

Because I Can

1. The Power of King

1 Kings 16:29-33

- he had power
- he was evil
- he had spiritual influences

Spiritual influences are ignored to our peril.

2. An incident of abusive power.

1 Kings 21:1-22

- the vineyard incident (v. 1-3)
- the King's response and rescue (v. 4-6)
- the seed of abusive power (v. 7-10)

3. A word from God.

1 Kings 21:1-22

- He's back—here comes the prophet

Life warning: Misappropriated authority can easily slide into arrogance and abuse of power.

Galatians 6:7-8

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

Jesus gives us an example of humility and submission to God that we can follow when we encounter situations where those in authority over us are arrogant or abuse their power or if we are entrusted with authority ourselves.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. In this week's sermon, we were challenged with the thought that misused authority can very quickly slide into arrogance and abuse of power. Think about the different areas of your life—the areas where you are in a position of authority. Have you ever felt the pull towards taking the easy way to resolve a problem, especially if you didn't have to deal with the consequences or how it impacted someone else later?

***Leader:** The fact that we all have a sinful nature means that we are quick to default to pride or to taking the 'easy way out'. When we are granted power or authority it is even more tempting to use it to our advantage because we often feel like we have earned or deserve these positions. Many of your group members will hold (or will have held in the past) positions of authority and power. Think of the various positions of power—parents, bosses, business owners, police officers, volunteer leaders, teachers, etc. Allow people to share situations where they felt the pull towards pride or misusing their authority to make things easier for themselves.*

2. Have you ever been in a situation where someone in authority over you misuses their power? What did that feel like?

***Leader:** There will likely be a variety of responses to this question. People in your group may have encountered parents that misused their authority, bosses who were demanding or took credit for their employee's ideas, or leaders who were rude or arrogant in their dealings with their volunteers. One of the goals of this study is to help people to have the tools to respond as Jesus did to authority over us, even when they are misusing their authority.*

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 26:31-35 & 69-75 (PETER'S DENIAL)

3. What did Peter think about his devotion to Christ? Why do you think he was convinced that he would 'never fall away' (v. 33)?

***Leader:** Peter believed he would never fall away from Christ, even if it meant he died (v. 35). Matthew 16 gives us a piece of this context. In Matthew 16:13-20 we see Peter confess Jesus as the Christ, and Jesus blesses him and says 'on this rock I will build my*

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church' and 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven'. After that, Peter and the disciples were with Jesus as he taught and performed many incredible miracles. Peter likely thought that he would never fall away because he was thinking that he was the man in charge—Jesus had promised that he would 'build His church' on Peter.

4. Why did Peter so quickly deny Christ when he was surrounded by others? What was he expecting Jesus to do with Jesus' power and authority? How was that different from what Jesus did?

***Leader:** We are also tempted to say the things that others want to hear, especially when we are in large groups of people that don't share our views or opinions or when things look like they are not going well for us. Peter's outlook on his relationship with Jesus was confident when he pronounced that he would 'never fall away'. This confidence came easily to him—they all had swords in their hands, and were fully expecting Jesus to wage war with the Romans. Just a few hours later, we see him crumble and weep. He may have caved as he watched a very different reality unfold. Jesus didn't tell them all to pick up their swords and charge the enemy—in fact, Jesus spent time in sorrowful prayer and asked them to put down their swords just a few verses later. Peter may have felt like he had something to prove as one of Jesus' disciples with his grand announcements of his devotion, but those announcements were difficult to continue with when things didn't unfold as he planned.*

5. What is your gut instinct or response when it comes to resolving problems and conflict? What can you learn about Christ's example of holding authority with humility from Peter's story?

***Leader:** For many people, a gut response to resolving problems and conflict is either to run away and hide, or to announce our own capability based on our expectations of what our authority should look like. This is what Peter did—he was confident in his authority on his own terms of what the future looked like. When we understand Christ as our ultimate authority, it flies in the face of how we are hardwired to resolve problems and conflict (flight or fight!). Holding our authority with humility allows us to face trials or disappointments understanding that our positions of authority do not define us.*

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 26:14-16 & 47-50 (JUDAS' BETRAYAL)

6. What did Judas receive in return for his betrayal of Christ? What was his motivation for betraying Christ? How was this an abuse of his position or power?

Leader: *Judas received thirty pieces of silver for turning Christ over to the chief priests. He was likely motivated by the silver he would receive, but he may also have been looking for the recognition from the chief priests as the one that had helped them accomplish this plan. It's important to remember that Judas was one of the disciples—we often forget that he had been with Christ, most likely serving and ministering with him. He had authority as one of Jesus' disciples, but he forgot that that even his authority was still under Christ's authority. Judas, like Peter, was expecting Jesus to wage war on the Romans with a showdown, and by this point in the story, he was not getting what he signed up for.*

7. Contrast the 'power' Judas showed with Jesus' reaction to his arrest. How might we learn from Jesus' example about what it means to use our power and authority rightly?

Leader: *From a worldly perspective, it seems like Judas has all of the power in this narrative. He is able to work out a bribe in exchange for his betrayal. He arrives at the place Jesus was speaking in Gethsemane with a 'large crowd armed with swords and clubs' (v. 47). Jesus, the one with all of the power, gives himself over willingly because He knows His Father's will. There is an underlying lesson through chapters 26 and 27 that true power is not what the world thinks it is—it's not force, bravado or weapons, but rather humility submitting itself to the will of God. Judas was showing the world how he thought things needed to go—with a public display of betrayal, almost as if he wanted everyone to see that he held the power or authority in that moment. Jesus was the one who actually held power, yet He submitted quietly to His Father's will without a fight, without weapons, without threats and without telling them all how powerful he was.*

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 26:6-13 (THE WOMAN ANOINTS JESUS)

8. What do you think motivated the woman to pour such valuable oil on Jesus' feet? Why do you think this woman approached Jesus with such humility? What could this outpouring of gratitude and devotion look like in our culture, or in your life?

Leader: *The woman approached Jesus with humility because it was all she had to give. A parallel passage to this story in Luke 7 (see v. 37) identifies her as a sinner, and we know that she was not a woman that was highly esteemed. She had no authority or power in worldly terms at that time. All she had to offer Jesus was her worship, and she*

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did so with an extravagant offering that would have cost her an incredible amount. It may take some time for your group members to think about what this sort of sacrifice would look like in our culture—something that is very costly, yet brought with humility. It may be for many of your group members that the most costly thing they have is time—what would it look like to give so much time to Jesus that others may think it is a waste? For others it may be finances, or relationships, or expertise. Take some time to think this through with your group.

9. Why does this woman's humble approach cause Jesus to favor her response and challenge the disciples (v. 10-13)? What does Jesus' affirmation of her outpouring tell us about the nature of power in God's kingdom?

Leader: *Jesus' affirmation of her sacrifice flipped people's ideas of 'right and wrong', 'power and authority', and the nature of the coming kingdom upside-down. The disciples thought that this was an improper use of their power, skills and resources—they thought that the money should go elsewhere. The fact that Jesus affirms her sacrifice even though the disciples were indignant points to the 'backwards' nature of God's kingdom—that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Do we approach Christ like the disciples did—as if he is a buddy with superpowers that we're excited to see? Or do we approach him as this woman did...giving extravagant love and worship in humility at his feet? Jesus quickly shifts their thinking to the real story going on—the story that he preached on the sermon on the mount—the story that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5), that the poor in spirit are blessed for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:3). The Kingdom, power and glory belong to Jesus, and his versions of power and glory don't always look like what we expect.*

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. Think about the examples we studied today—they showed us that Jesus' example of power and authority were often not at all what the culture expected power and authority to look like. What does it look like to embrace Jesus' counter-cultural example as you lead or hold authority over others in your workplaces, family, or ministries?

11. What does it look like to follow Jesus' example when those in authority over us misuse or abuse their power? What are some ways we can point one another towards Jesus' example when we feel this is happening to us?

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Leader: *Each person in your group will resonate with these questions in different ways as they are likely all in different positions of power and authority and under different positions of power and authority. Help your group members to think through the places they have 'power' or 'authority' (parents, work supervisors or bosses, group leaders, teachers, etc.). Encourage group members to think of specific situations where they can exercise the humility and gentleness that Jesus modeled. Spend some time evaluating your growth group's role in helping each other with this. It might mean that when a group member is frustrated with someone at work, that you have permission to gently remind them of this study and the example of humility Jesus sets for them.*

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer as a group, thanking God for the example he has given us in Jesus. Pray for those in your group who are in positions of authority. Ask God that he would protect them from arrogance and enable them to embrace humility in their roles. Pray for those who have experienced pain from others who have abused their power or authority. Ask God to continue to lead and guide each member of your group through their weeks.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How can you encourage those that are in positions of power and authority over you?
 - What is one way you can exercise humility in your roles of authority or power this week?
 - What is one way this week that you can stop to remember the 'backwards, upside-down' nature of the kingdom of God and the call to exercise power with humility?
- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- Follow up or encouragement for anyone who mentioned specific ways they were going to follow Jesus' example of humble authority.

SPOTLIGHT ON SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Another passage worth considering as you prepare for this study is Philippians 2, where the nature of humility (servant leadership) is taught:

Imitating Christ's Humility

2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

*⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

*⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

*⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

*¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Leaders, if we take this passage seriously and strive to 'have the same mindset as Christ Jesus,' how would this impact every aspect of our lives? Our growth groups? Our marriages? Our children? Our church? Our workplaces?

Servant leadership's best example is Jesus; however it has taken off over the past several decades as a viable leadership style in the workforce- because it just makes sense. Here are 9 practical qualities, from a secular perspective on what servant leadership looks like.

<http://www.skipprichard.com/9-qualities-of-the-servant-leader/>