



EQUIPPING LEADER MINISTRIES
CATCHING THE NEXT WAVE OF MINISTRY

BUILDING BLOCK 1

IDENTITY



MODULE ONE: It All Starts with Identity
MODULE TWO: Influence & Spiritual
Authority in the Church

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Slide: Module Two: Influence & Spiritual Authority in the Church

LOGISTICS:

- Welcome/Schedule (Training Time: 55mins): Handouts, Facilities, Questions
- Today we will continue with the first building block--"Identity", discussing "Influence & Spiritual Authority in the Church." (Training Time: 55mins)

REVIEW:

Slide: The Four Building Blocks of Equipping:

Review the Four Building Blocks briefly (ELM Overview, Mod 2 link) Or show video: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/594958408>

We dig deeper into the first of the four building blocks of Equipping—Identity. Specifically, we'll look at the role of identity wielding spiritual authority in equipping. Equippers intentionally move away dependence upon positional authority (or any other kind of controlling behavior). They train themselves to depend on spiritual authority which flows out of being intimately familiar with God's love as well as learning to rely wholly upon this love. This reliance is the appropriate source of influence.

Facilitator's Note - The purpose of this module is to demonstrate:

- *That Jesus intended for spiritual authority to be the source of influence in the Church.*
- *That our ability to wield spiritual authority flows out of our understanding of who we are - beloved children of God.*
- *That serving as an equipper using spiritual authority allows us to respond to God's people on a relational basis rather than a hierarchical one.*
- *That there are habits of spiritual authority that equippers can cultivate.*

TEACH:

Slide: Influence and Spiritual Authority in the Church

As discussed in Module 1, "Identity" as a beloved child of God is the key to learning the Kingdom of God's upside-down approach to leadership. Of course, there are questions that arise from this reality. For instance, what is the impact of our identity on our interactions between God's people? How did Jesus' view identity, influence and spiritual authority in the life of the Church? How does this change the way we think about leadership in the Church? How does that reality impact equipping? These are some of the questions we will deal with in this module.

Slide: Discussion (10 mins)

- *What are the differences between secular authority and spiritual authority?*
- *How have you experienced secular authority exercised in the Church? In your congregation?*
- *Who do you know that mirrors spiritual authority in a way that is consistent with Jesus' teaching and approach?*

Facilitator's Note: The point of this discussion is not to pursue "correct answers" but rather to stimulate thinking about the distinction between secular (the "gentile" approach) and spiritual authority. Expect there to be some pushback as to the practicality of spiritual authority in a world dependent on and accustomed to secular expressions of power and influence. At this point, let the tension rest, using it as an opportunity to think anew about how Jesus led and how he expects us to lead. Assure the group that the material circles around to that question.

Slide: Mark 10:42-43

"Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant..." (Mark 10:42-43)

In this verse, Jesus' turns the widely practice principles for leadership on their head.

He...

- Cares about how his people exercise influence. He "called them together" to clarify the Kingdom approach to influence.
- Opposes the secular (Gentile) approach to influence, which depends on acquiring position and power and using it for one's own advantage. He insists, "not so with you." (By the way, while here Jesus doesn't point out that this is also the way Jewish leaders acted, he does in other moments.)
- Teaches that the ability to wield influence appropriately in the Kingdom of God resides in a commitment to sacrificial service ("whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant.")
- Understands that the fruit of "no strings attached" service is the opposite of the controlling "lord it over" secular way of doing things. This service nurtures a different species of influence because it prioritizes the wellbeing of the one being served. It is spiritual authority (rather than positional power) ("greatness" -- as opposed to secular leadership which "lords it over" its subjects).

He recognized spiritual authority as the driving force of the relationships between his people and those who equip them. He recognizes that this is the

healthiest exercise of influence not only for the influenced, but for those who influence. It is good for everyone's souls.

In this verse, Jesus makes it clear that leadership flowing out of service the healthiest form of influence. While Jesus recognizes that this is counter-intuitive, he was unapologetic in his teaching. It is how he led, and he did so with abandonment, expectation, and joy.

The commitment to service flowed from a deep understanding of influence, one that is not incorporated in many leadership circles. What was this insight? What compelled him to not only recommend a servant posture, but enthusiastically model it? It was a commitment to wield only spiritual authority to exercise power and influence. Jesus taught and demonstrated that this authority articulated itself through service.

Slide: What is the Church?

In many congregations, secular authority is built into the fabric of their approach to church life and governance. This emphasis may revolve around our (rarely spoken, but often assumed) understanding of the Church. The fundamental question we must honestly answer is, "What is the Church?"

A Place? Our language represents the Church as a place, for example, "*Our church is on the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue.*"

A Program? Again, our language refers to the Church as a program. Think about the way we say, "Church starts at 11:00!"

A Person? We even use phrases like, "*I go to Joe Jones' church.*" This indicates that sometimes we think of Church as belonging to a person. When we create systems that depend on nurturing or sustaining these rather than seeking out the advice of the "Builder of the Church," we flirt with moving relationship with Jesus or others out of the center of disciple-making and replacing it with a system.

Optional Discussion question: "How might each one of these definitions of a church impact the way leadership within the church functions?" (For instance, if the "place" is as a primary understanding of the church, the emphasis becomes building and sustaining an impressive facility. The logical conclusion of this approach is that people begin to see a facility as the primary tool for disciple-making. Of course, buildings can be helpful, even necessary tools. However, it is easy to spend more energy on the building – a non-essential component of disciple-making – than on relationships – disciple-making's essential component. Should we take care of buildings? Yes, but, resources and loyalty are very often transferred to the care and nurture of the facility to the detriment of relationships – especially with those outside of the congregation's circle of fellowship.)

Slide: What is the Church, Really?

What is the Church, really? The Church is a people!

Optional: Watch Video about the Amoeba Church: [BB1 Mod-2 VID.mp4](#)

Ekklesia – the word for church in the New Testament is "ekklesia". It literally means, "the called-out ones." It refers to the people who have responded to Jesus' call to follow him. They leave behind the kingdom of the world and follow Jesus into a full life focused on service in God's Kingdom. This understanding of the church is not dependent on a place or a program or even a human leader. The ekklesia's leader is Jesus, who uses apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to build up his followers for acts of service. Ephesians 4:11 helps us understand that Jesus commissions equippers to help with this process. (For more on the role of equippers, see Building Block III)

Responsibility for building the ekklesia, the "called out ones", remains with Jesus. He alone has authority to build the church. Any authority human leaders utilize in the church is on loan from Jesus and is spiritual in nature. The human response to this "on loan" authority is humble stewardship. More on this later in this module.

Slide: One definition of the Church is...

There is a difference between the Church and a congregation of God's people.

One definition of the Church is... "A people who finds their ultimate identity as beloved children of God (*as discussed in the identity module*) and are set apart by God to (as a community) usher in his Kingdom."

A congregation is a local gathering (sort of a subset) of the worldwide universal church!

Facilitator: Discuss the definition. Perhaps ask, "How does this definition differ from what a typical congregational member might use as a definition? How might this definition impact the way we practice our life together as God's people?" Again, there are no "right" answers. The point is to expand understanding about the nature of the church!

Slide: What did Jesus say about the Church?

What did Jesus say about the church? "'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'"

*Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."
(Matthew 16:15-18)*

He is saying, "I will build my 'ekklesia', my people." He doesn't mention a temple or a program. Jesus mentions Peter only because he rightly identifies the foundation of the Church – Jesus the Messiah.

Again, Jesus claims the responsibility for building the "ekklesia." The rock he will build it upon? His followers' recognition of his authority as the Messiah.

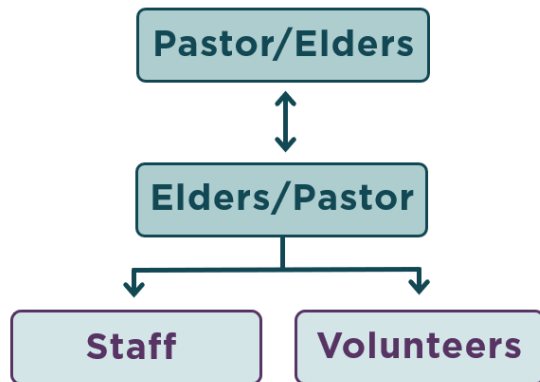
Note: There are plenty of exegetical explanations for Jesus' renaming of Peter. The point of this study is not to unpack them here. It is enough to say that Jesus' description of a Rock to build on is less about a particular person and more about the commitment of the person to following the Messiah. After his re-instatement, Peter provided a good example of following the Messiah into sacrificial service, as did John, Paul, Stephen, and innumerable others throughout scripture and church history. This approach nurtures spiritual authority which in turn, unleashes the Church (God's people) into sacrificial (and powerful) service that multiplied into an ever-expanding movement. Today, amidst all the chaos of our world, the Church can thrive as Church leaders follow the Messiah with uncompromising commitment to his work and Lordship.

Slide: How the "Church" Really works

You can play the video or use next slides to explain: [My Garage, a Whiteboard and Coffee | BB1: Mod2 - "Influence in the Church and Spiritual Authority"](#)

Slide: How the Church works:

How we think it works:



Most people, if you ask them to draw a picture of how their church is organized, will draw an organizational chart. In the top box, almost always they will write either Senior/Lead Pastor or Elders. Whichever one goes in the top box, the other entity is almost always placed in the subservient box. Under it, often depending on the size of the congregation, there will be other entities sketched in – staff, volunteers, or some other designation. This design allows for there to be (theoretically) a very clear line of authority. Everyone knows who is in charge.

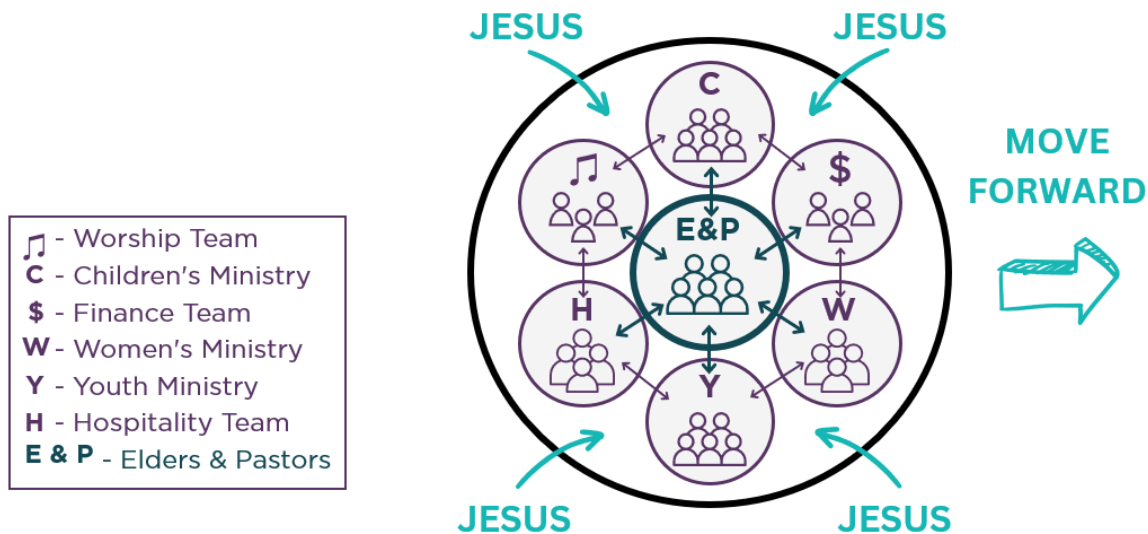
Author's Note: It has been interesting to me, in several instances, that when I would ask a lead pastor to draw the picture, he or she would place the lead pastor in the top box.

When I asked Elders from the same congregation to draw the picture, they would place themselves in the top spot.

Unsurprisingly, usually the reason I was asking the question in the first case was because I was helping the congregation work through a significant conflict. Most congregational conflict arises over disagreement on who gets to decide. Almost always, this conflict grows along relational lines.

Slide: How the “Church” works:

How it really works:



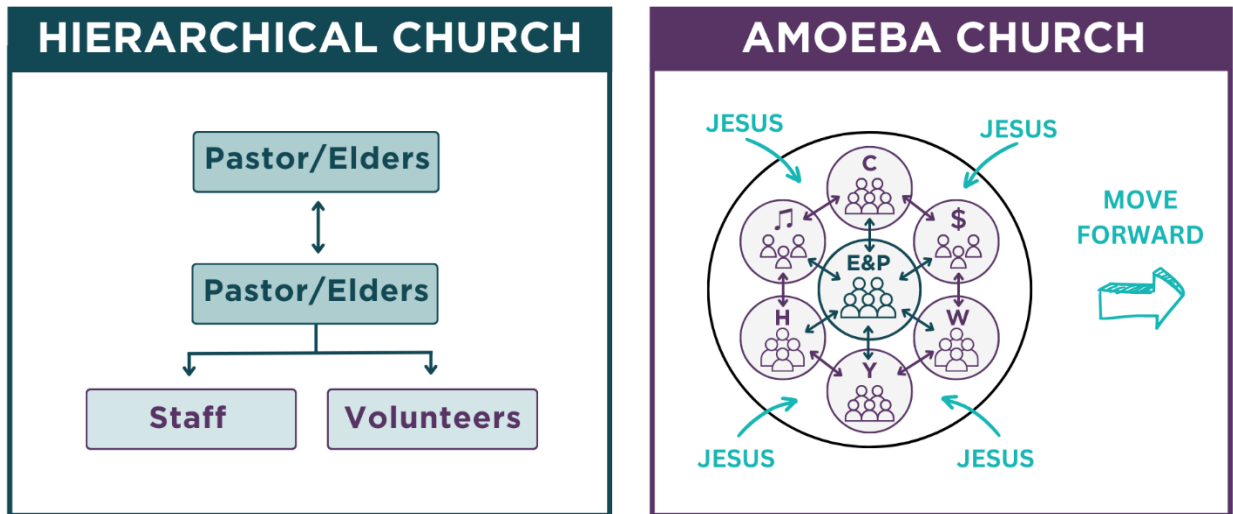
A more accurate description of how church really works is to think of it as a cluster of relationships formed around similar concerns. Sometimes these groupings are official. We call them committees or teams. These relationships form around a common commitment to a specific ministry. It may be those who are concerned with money. Many congregations call this group the "Finance Committee." There are groups that form because they have a common life experience with others. Often these are small groups made up of parents of small children or people sharing an experience of grief, etc. Some are formal – task forces, small groups, committees, etc. Some are informal – people who have an affinity and like to go to lunch together after a Sunday worship service. Often, people belong to more than one group.

The beautiful thing about these groups is that people tend to take them seriously. They embrace the assignment they have been given, and usually approach the achievement of this assignment with urgency and passion. They also take seriously the bond that forms between those in their group. They pray for them, support them - they love them. They influence each other, and their group influences other groups. This can be extremely positive, like when the group of Youth workers connects with the Compassion ministries and help the compassion people feed homeless people by sending them a dozen students excited to help. It can also be negative, like if that group decides to do their ministry at 10:30 on a Sunday morning – right when the group responsible for putting together a common worship experience has focused their energy on corporately worshipping together. This becomes more difficult if the communication between all of the diverse groups is not great!

In the middle of all of this is the group tasked with helping this amoeba find its way forward into the purposes that Jesus himself has for the congregation. The amoeba church doesn't respond very well to secular leadership (and shouldn't). It best responds to spiritual leadership. In fact, to move the congregation forward requires the work of Christ to help it unite around a common purpose (work together) in the bond of love (get along). It also requires that its leaders take seriously Jesus' teaching on leadership and embrace spiritual authority.

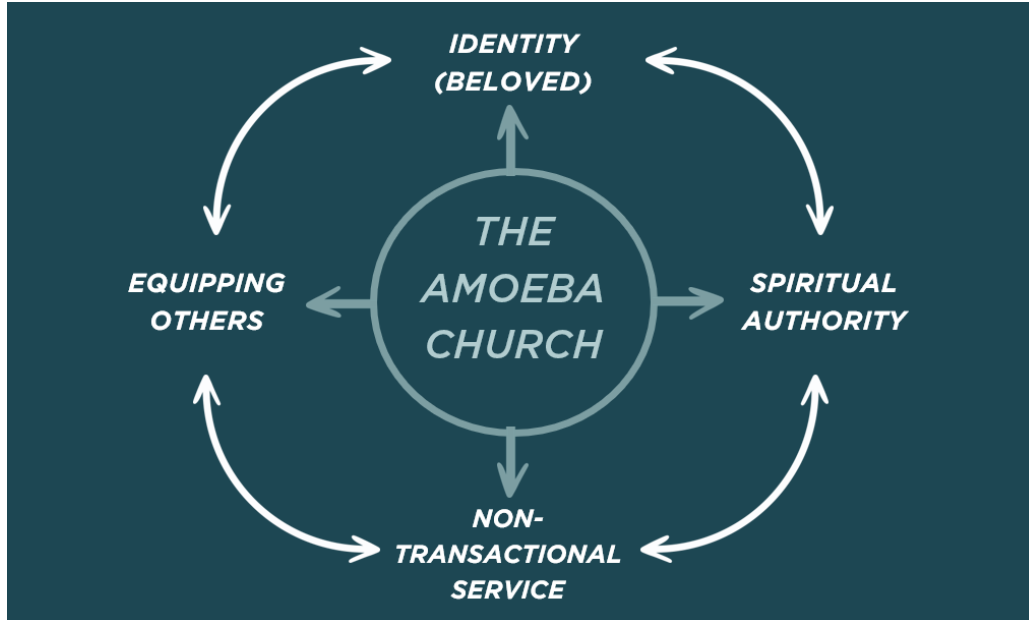
This doesn't mean there will never be conflict. However, it does mean that the conflict will be resolved in ways that align with Jesus' teaching on the subject, leading to a healthier expression of the work of the Church as the embodiment of Christ.

Slide: Hierarchical Vs. Amoeba Church



- ASK group: How does leadership differ in these two models? (Get input)
- Key distinctions include:
 - Hierarchical is Leader-centered vs. Amoeba is Relationship-centered
 - Hierarchical emphasizes Positional Authority vs. Amoeba emphasizes Spiritual Authority
 - Hierarchical focuses on (arguments over) “who gets to decide” vs. Amoeba highlights finding agreement on the Lord’s direction leading to a release of authority and engendering trust.
 - Hierarchical is often easier and faster to make things happen vs. Amoeba which while slow, creates unity, mutual respect and greater commitment to the cause.

Slide: The Amoeba Church



The **Amoeba church** is the crucible in which our true identity is purified. Out of the crucible, our identity as a beloved child of God is poured out and molded into spiritual authority and becomes a tool of influence. It is influence that responds to those around us without depending on position, coercion, manipulation, passive aggressiveness, or any other expression of "ministry cracks" that grasp at control. Spiritual authority seeks to pass on power rather than grasp for it. (This is the essence of equipping, by the way.)

It's only as our identity is refined into an bona fide confidence in our status as a beloved child of God, that we have the spiritual resources needed to depend on spiritual authority as our unique source of influence.

This is the great distinctive of leadership in the Kingdom of God. It is non-hierarchical, non-transactional, relationship-based, self-sacrificial service for the good of God's people and the sake of Christ. This sort of influence is the kind of authority Jesus employs to make his Bride beautiful. It is good for both the leader (who would be better called an "equipper" in this paradigm) and those he or she influences. It nurtures an abundant life full of effective service for all!

Slide: Discussion (10 mins)

- *What is the definition of influence?*
- *Who gives it?*
- *Why do they give it?*
- *When is that healthy and when is it toxic?*

What is the definition of "influence"? The power or capacity to cause an affect the thinking and behavior of others.

Who gives it? The followers give the power to allow others to hold sway over them. Even tyrants are only given power by followers. They bully followers and coerce followership through fear. At its most basic level, however, if the follower wants to resist and is willing to pay the price for not following, then the tyrant has no power over them. They may kill the body, but the unyielding soul is intact.

Why do they give it? Because they believe the leader can or will do something for or to them.

When is that healthy and when is it toxic? When it becomes transactional, the possibility for toxicity is increased. It is healthy when the follower trusts that the leader's influence is exercised in the follower's best interest, even if it is to the detriment of the leader's best interest.

PART 2

Slide: Basics of Spiritual Authority

Our identity as beloved children of Christ leads to a deep trust in Jesus. This trust leads to humility (that is, total dependence on Christ) which releases us into the ability to serve with no strings attached. Non-transactional service is the basis of spiritual authority and leads to a willingness to release control. We can't wield spiritual authority apart from service flowing from humility, which flows from trust, which flows from knowing and relying on the reality that we are dearly loved children of God.

The Church is the arrangement of relationships in which spiritual authority develops. It is in the "amoeba church," with its recognition of the role of interpersonal interactions (and the fragility of maintaining these connections), that we work out the expression of our identity and exercise spiritual authority.

Secular authority emphasizes securing and holding power. It cultivates the desire to become the one who controls, the "one who gets to decide". This authority often (usually?!) exercises control in a way that benefits the leader's preservation of power and those who support their leadership.

Slide: Definition of Spiritual Authority

- Spiritual authority is the right to influence conferred upon a person because others perceive that person who knows and relies on God's love,

and unreservedly follows Jesus. (Remember this from earlier in the 4x4, Mod 2?)

- Spiritually-minded people will then allow the equipper to influence them.

Slide: People Follow Equippers with Spiritual Authority Because They...

People Follow Equippers with Spiritual Authority Because They...

- Inspire confidence. People follow an equipper with spiritual authority because they are confident in the equipper's perspective. They discern that the perspective is grounded in scripture, faith, wisdom and a sense that the perspective is the very best option for the followers. The equipper also actively invites followers to seek the Lord's voice before they follow.
- Model Authentic Relationship w/ Jesus - There is a warmth in the equipper's life that reveals a profound connection with Jesus. It is recognized because the equipper exemplifies a humble disposition marked by an ample dose of the fruit of the Spirit. There is dependence on the Lord that flows from a deep trust that Jesus is at work and will work out the results for his own glory. This trust is nurtured by reliance on God's active, redeeming love for His people, including the ones the equipper is influencing.
- Are Wise, Courageous and Principled - The equipper carries deep within a set of convictions (anchored in scripture and propelled into action by the Holy Spirit) that brings perspective to the ministry and sustains the equipper through difficult situations. The equipper's activities are consistent from circumstance to circumstance because they are anchored in principles.

Slide: Spiritual Authority Develops in Equippers/Leaders When They...

Spiritual Authority develops in Equippers/Leaders when we...

- Experience God deeply. It is in the deepest experiences of life - both in hardship and in victory - that we recognize our dependence on God. In hardship, our awareness of God's sustaining grace deepens and drives us towards humility. In moments of victory, we recognize that it was the Lord who carried us there, and his grace drives us to gratitude for his work. Both deepen our connection and dependence upon him. If processed rightly, these experiences will drive us into a deeper appreciation of and reliance upon his love. When during the highs and lows of ministry and life, we decide to "taste" the love and work of God, embracing the pain and

deflecting the glory, we allow God's Presence to forge our character into one that more directly mirrors Christ's. He wielded only spiritual authority and demonstrated self-sacrificing love.

- **Practice Spiritual Disciplines.** Spiritual disciplines are environments we design to open ourselves up to God's refining work. Through these exercises, we learn to depend on God's work in our lives rather than attempting to self-manufacture our own character. When we sit in silence (especially in a committee meeting!), for example, we strip ourselves of our tendency to explain and control. We learn to trust that God can and will work (even in a committee meeting) without our "brilliant" contributions. Silence teaches us to trust in God's sovereignty and tame our desire to explain ourselves, our insights and actions. This cultivates humility, a primary characteristic of Jesus' ministry, and the foundation of spiritual authority.
- **Use our gifts for God's Kingdom.** Often, in an effort to "get things done", we strive to do things that God didn't gift us to do. When we do this, we find ourselves overwhelmed or underqualified because we are trying to do things we were not designed to do. These feelings of inadequacy tempt us to engage in controlling behaviors that are more like "lording" it over others than serving them. When we function within our God-given giftings, two things happen. First, we experience a supernatural energy. Our awareness of God's power flowing through us keeps us centered, dependent, and humble. It catalyzes spiritual authority. Second, we recognize that we need others to fill in gaps in ministry. This fosters humility because we depend on God (and other gifted people) to accomplish his purposes. We release power into the hands of others, which is a key aspect of equipping!

Slide: Habits of Spiritual Authority

So, equippers have a part to play in exercising influence. They:

- **Pray diligently** because they know that spiritual authority comes from God alone. (Authority is on loan from the Lord!)
- **Think thoroughly** because they know they will have to give an account for their actions. (Example: "I'll meditate on that.")
- **Sacrifice personally** because they know they must put the needs of others ahead of their own.
- **Recognize Authority** because they know there is freedom and protection in being under authority. (They design structures to which they submit.)

Slide: More Habits of Spiritual Authority...

In addition, we who lead with spiritual authority:

- **Respond humbly** to leadership "hits." We know that God is responsible for defending our influence. No powering up. No defensiveness.

- **Invite** rather than insist. We know that spiritually-minded people will recognize spiritual authority and then will follow.
- **Equip** confidently and humbly because we are creating a place where the Holy Spirit is free to be the true leader. We are a channel, nothing more.

Slide: Equipping is the logical outgrowth of wielding spiritual authority

In practice, a person wielding spiritual authority is never comfortable if someone responds to their ministry, unless that person is convinced that they too are responding to the direction and work of the Holy Spirit in their life. Spiritual authority's power does not move others towards the purposes of the leader, but rather towards the purposes that God has for them. Spiritual authority is not about the leader, but rather pointing the follower towards an opportunity to discern God's guidance for them. It gives the power of discernment to the follower. This is a step of faith in God's ability to move his people, and in his people's ability to discern God's will. Spiritual authority embraces a transference of power to others. This is the essence of equipping.

Slide: Reflection

Allow 5 minutes for people to process the information in a personal way, then ask them to share the last two answers with someone else.

Review your notes and ask yourself:

- What is God speaking to me about in this process?

Share with someone:

- How am I going to respond to God's voice/apply insights to my life/work?
- Who can help me by providing resources, encouragement, and accountability?

Slide: Acknowledgements

- Dr. Robert Clinton
- David M. Leach
- C.W. Perry
- Dr. Charles Mylander
- Ray Canfield

Most of this module's material is influenced by Dr. Robert Clinton. His book, "Having a Ministry That Lasts" and his DMin. Seminar, "Principle-based Leadership" echo through these ideas.

I have also seen these principles at work, especially in the lives of my leadership mentors. They are my father, David M. Leach, and father-in-law,

C.W. Perry, both excellent pastors. I also include two of my "bosses." Ray Canfield, field director in Central America, and Charles Mylander, former Superintendent of Friends Church Southwest. Neither of them was bossy. All four of these modeled the power and effectiveness of spiritual authority in such a way that Clinton's teachings came alive through my observance of their service.

I am grateful for them all.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18

"When teaching that he is the Bread of Life, and that his disciples must eat his body and drink his blood. He met pushback. On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?' Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.' From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." John 6:60-64, 66

"Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them." Mark 10:42-43

"...he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" Philippians 2:6-8

"And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17

"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" Matthew 17:5

"This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God

lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.”

1 John 4:13-16

Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.” John 5:19-21

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” John 10:17-18

“Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.” John 8:54

“...apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:13

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18