

“Authority Issues—Gone Gabriel”

Ed Young tells about a vacation he and his son took a couple years back. They went to the remote island off the coast of Central America to do some snorkeling and fishing. Where they stayed was not a resort, it was pretty rough and scary. It was a little compound run by a local family. He said it was a very interesting place and the people that kind of ran this place were very interesting.

The guy who managed the place was an amazing man. And then there was a gentleman that worked for him named Gabriel. Gabriel was a real character. And one day, for some reason, Gabriel got into a heated argument with the guy that he worked for, his boss. Gabriel got so angry he stole his boss's bottle of rum one morning and drank the entire bottle. Needless to say, he was inebriated, intoxicated. Not only did he steal the guy's bottle of rum, he also stole the guy's kayak. He began to try to paddle this kayak away from this island, out in the middle of the ocean...fell out of the kayak, crawled back onto the kayak and began to paddle toward land. Now, on a motorized craft, it's an hour trip from that island to the mainland. By kayak, it's seven hours.

There's poor Gabriel, drunk in the high seas, subject to sharks, and storms, and even pirates in that area of the world. Gabriel had a fit of rebellion. He lost it and put his life in danger. Ed said that it became part of his vocabulary after that trip that when somebody lost it, when somebody would blow their top, or rebel against authority, they'd say, "He's gone Gabriel! Or She's goin' Gabriel. Or have you gone Gabriel?!"

And that's the question I want to ask you today. Have you gone Gabriel? I know I have before. Rebelled against somebody's authority. I have jumped in the kayak, done the pushback; and I have become intoxicated with my own independence, inebriated with rebellion, and I paddled away from where I should be. I paddled away, and so have you, from authority. Have you gone Gabriel? Yes, you have.

The mantra these days goes something like this: "I want to call my own shots. I want to run the show. Don't tell me what to do? Who made you boss? It's all about me. I am my own man. I am my own woman. I'm it."

Why do we have that mentality? Sometimes I struggle with it and so do you. Why do we have this rebellious streak in us? What's so interesting about it is the fact that so often rebellion and authority issues manifest themselves in mundane ways. We go Gabriel in mundane ways.

Your boss is a jerk. You know it and so does everybody else. You work tirelessly for this guy. He never says, "Thank you." He shows favoritism to a select few, but not you. You turn the report in and he says, "Redo the report." What's your reaction? Do you do the pushback, jump in the kayak and go Gabriel? Do you rebel against him or do you submit to his authority?

Oh, and check this out. Authority takes lots of different forms. You go out to eat. The waitress says, "Here's your table." You eye a table by the window. "That looks better," you say. "Can we sit over there?" The waitress says, "I'm sorry, sir. That table is reserved." What do we do? Do we do the pushback, jump in the kayak and go Gabriel? Do we rebel? Do we say, "Let me talk to the manager!" Or do we submit to her authority?

Your kid's not getting the amount of playing time that she deserves on the soccer team. You know she's the best player on the team and this coach just will not put her into the game. What do you do? Do you go Gabriel? Do you rebel? Or do you submit to the coach's authority?

You're sixteen years old and your parents have set this thing called a curfew. Do you go Gabriel? Do you get into high drama and disrespect them and say, "I can't believe it!" and "Everybody else ..."? Do you do that? Or do you say, "Mom, Dad, I submit to your authority. Thanks for setting the curfew at 10:30. I appreciate that."

Everywhere we turn, we deal with authority issues. It's amazing how we all deal with them and process them. And throughout this study we're going to find out something. We're going to find out that if we have authority issues, ultimately we have an issue with God. An issue that we have to get to the bottom of if we're going to live out the best possible version of our lives.

Let's pause and take a look at a few authority issues in the scriptures. Let's begin in the beginning. With Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Everything was perfect and God, in his authority, sets some boundaries. "You've got all this good stuff to enjoy, so enjoy! But here are my boundaries, don't eat from this one tree in the middle of the Garden." They can live under God's authority and have all kinds of blessings, or go Gabriel and lose it all.

You see, God always, always works through authority. That's the way he speaks to us. That's the way he leads us. That's the way he deals with us. So we must get the authority issues down. If we have an authority issue, we have an issue with God.

The children of Israel had authority issues. God had placed his man Moses to be in authority over them. The people rebelled against that authority again and again and paid the price. A 40 day journey to the Promised Land ended up taking 40 years! Do you remember Jonah, God's running man? Man, he was into rebellion, wasn't he? God said, "Jonah, go to Nineveh, take a word to the people there, a word of repentance, a word of hope." Jonah said, "Oh, I don't like Nineveh. Those people over there are bad. They're angry. I want to go somewhere else."

So Jonah went the opposite direction, jumped on a cruise ship; and because of his rebellion, he was thrown overboard and he spent three nights in the belly of a whale. Don't get hung up on the details here. That's a very human story of rebellion against God's authority. Jonah's story is my story, maybe it's yours too.

There's a common thread in all of those stories, in all of those accounts. People often ask, "Okay, what's the result of rebellion? What's the result of authority issues? Where will it lead me? Think about this. Adam and Eve—castaway from the Garden of Eden. The children of Israel—castaway from The Promised Land. Jonah—castaway from the boat. Gilligan—a castaway! I just threw that in to see if you were listening.

Whenever we go Gabriel, whenever we do the pushback, jump on the kayak, and paddle away; whenever we become intoxicated with our independence, inebriated with rebellion, what happens? We are going to subject ourselves to strong currents, to shark-infested waters, to pirates, to all sorts of problems. Some of the time? No. All of the time. We are signing up for confusion and static and chaos whenever we rebel against authority.

Let's dig a little deeper here. Because God always works through authority, we will never, ever, ever reach our ultimate position until we live a life of submission. You see, in the Bible, Christianity is paradoxical. The way up is down. If you want to be great, become a servant. If you want to be first, be last. That's what the Bible says. God is a God of authority. It's in his nature and character.

And Jesus modeled submission. The apostle Paul put it this way, powerful words, **"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:5-8, NIV).**

When Jesus was living on this earth, he lived here for 33 years, not only did he submit to God's authority, he also submitted to the authorities on planet earth. He said stuff like this in Matthew 22:21. He said, **"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21, NIV).**

The Apostle Paul had authority issues before he became Christ-follower. Afterward he began to understand. Here's what he said in Romans 13:1, **"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" (Romans 13:1, NIV).**

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, Aaron. Are you talking about that jerk at work that I call my boss?" That's what the Bible says. "Whoa, whoa, whoa, Aaron. Are you talking about the waitress who will not let me sit at the table by the window?" That's right. "Are you talking about the soccer coach who's not going to play my daughter?" Yeah. "You mean my parents who set this ridiculous curfew?" Yeah. That's right. "For there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God."

Paul goes on in Romans 13:2, **"Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."** That's a little scary to me. With each stroke of the paddle, we're causing a bigger and bigger gap between ourselves and God.

So, we need to get under those things that God has put over us so we can get over those things that God has put under us. Because there are certain things God has put under us, but we'll never know what those things are until we get under what God has put over us.

Well, why would God put authority over me? In our culture, in this day and age, that just sounds capricious and cruel. It sounds like he's some cosmic killjoy. Why would God do that? You know, I'm a "why" guy. Why would God, our loving God, do such a thing? This is where the rubber hits the road.

First, **God's authority provides protection.** Authority – and we need to download this – authority is all about protection. It's not about dominance. God puts it there for our protection. He knows when we're under authority, we're going to be protected, we're going to be purposeful and we're going to be powerful. And he knows for us to reach the ultimate position in life, we've got to live a life of submission, submission to authority.

The answer, though, lies in this umbrella. Are you an umbrella fella? I don't really like umbrellas that much. I keep one in my trunk, but I rarely use it. But just to carry an umbrella around? That's just not me. I'm just not an umbrella fella and I don't know why. Maybe I don't think it's masculine or something. I don't know. But I've paid the price because I have not carried umbrellas. And in this crazy Missouri weather, I've been hammered by hail—ping, ping, ping, ping, ping. I have been soaked to the bone by rain. I just don't carry an umbrella. My wife is awesome. She always carries an umbrella. And sometimes I'll try to get underneath her umbrella, but you know, that doesn't work so well and I still get soaked.

Authority is all about the umbrella, especially God's authority, because God has an authority structure. He always works through authority. It's for our...what? Our protection. Now how idiotic would I look if I did this? [holding the umbrella out to the side at arm's length.] "Wow, it's raining. I have this umbrella and I don't know why in the world I can't really see straight. I don't know why in the world I'm being hammered by hail and pelted by all this rain. I just don't know."

You'd go, "Aaron, man, have you lost your mind? Get underneath the umbrella." God wants us to live underneath authority for our protection. Because once I get outside of God's protection, what's going to happen? I am subject now to elements that are so strong and so powerful they can mess me up. I am not tough enough, big enough, or bad enough to take these elements. But when I'm underneath God's authority structure, I am protected. Isn't God good? Isn't He amazing?

I think back to my childhood. Playing with matches. My parents were crystal clear on this. Don't do it. "But I want to, I'll be safe, I won't set anything on fire." When I rebelled I always took it one step further. Not only did I have some matches in my room, I also had some candles. I think they were ones I snuck home from a Christmas Eve service! So, I'm playing with matches, lighting the candles, messing around and dripped hot wax on my hand. When I got the hot wax on my hand I dropped the candle and burned a hole in the carpet in my room, set my bed spread on fire. The fire went out, but my mom found out and it was not pretty! She, how shall I put this, impressed upon me just how dangerous it was, how my rebellion could have burned down the house and we could have lost everything. The sting of that "impression" lasted several days.

What happened? I got out from under the authority of my parents. I did my own deal and we all almost paid the price. And some of you right now know what I'm talking about and you're saying, "Aaron, man, my house is on fire. I was playing with matches and the fire lit and I'm not sure I can put this thing out. I'm trying to do this and I'm trying to do that. But I've got a problem, a real problem." The reason is authority. The reason is because you've got authority issues. God has it there for your protection. Come underneath God's authority. See who you are before God.

The church is God's authority. We're to be underneath the protection of the church. What does that mean? God wants us to do life together. The church is a colossal collection of moral foul-ups. We're all fallen, we're all fallible. We've been saved by the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. We're to be under the protection of the church. We're to worship together. We're to serve in the church and outside the church. We should revolve our social life, our relational life, around the church.

But I've seen this happen too many times. A family will be a part of the church. They'll be doing life in the church. They'll be serving in the church, taking part in worship consistently and then one day they make a little bit of sweet moola, and then they step out from underneath the authority of the church. They buy the house at the lake, or they buy the boat or whatever. On the weekends, now, they're always chasing fun fixes. And then, suddenly, they have some problems in their marriage. And then they don't understand why their kids are rebelling. Yet, they've rebelled against the authority of God. They've rebelled against the authority of this church. And you know the rest of the story.

God has placed authority here for our protection. Once we get under the elements, we're subjecting ourselves to temptations, to forces, to things that'll trip us up and cause fires in the house. It's not worth it. God's authority is for our protection.

Another great purpose behind God's authority is that **it shows me my uniqueness before God.** It shows me who I am before God; that I'm a Picasso, a Renoir, a Monet.

We have a real self-esteem issue in our culture. We don't know who we are and we try everything to find out. But there's no way you'll discover who you are until you understand the authority of God. So many people have a radically distorted self-esteem. So many people see their self-esteem this way: they see their self-esteem horizontally. They see themselves the way others look at them. And if I see myself the way you look at me, I'll have a distorted self-esteem, because I'm always trying to please and appease others.

"Oh, oh. Okay, he thinks this and she thinks that and that group over there—Oh, wow...." But look at me. [Again holding the umbrella out to the side at arm's length.] Look. And it's raining on me and I'm being hammered with hail. I can't even look up to see myself before God. All I can see are the people horizontally.

Well, a great self-esteem is seeing yourself vertically. I get under God's authority, and once I'm under God's authority, it can rain and hail and all this stuff. It can rain cats and dogs, but guess what? I can see clearly. I see that I'm made in the image of God, that I'm not junk and that I'm one of a kind. No one has my skill set, my laugh, my personality, my walk, my talk. This is incredible. I see myself the way God sees me—nothing more, nothing less. And then I see these authority structures that God has placed in my life to mold and shape me into a Renoir, a Monet, a Picasso.

That's the genius of God! That's the brilliance of God! Can you see how God's a God of order and structure? God's all about authority. He's all about authority for powerful reasons. It's not about dominance, it's about protection, it's about learning our true value.

There's even another purpose that I want to tell you about when I think about the authority of God. **It gives me a holistic approach to worship.** When I'm under God's authority, when I'm under his chain of command, it gives me a holistic view of worship.

What is worship? One hour on Sunday? No. Worship is a 24/7 deal. Everything I do should be an act of worship. I'm under God's authority, so everything—every single thing I do—should be an act of worship.

But we compartmentalize it, don't we. [open the umbrella.] We say, "Okay, when I'm with these guys, these Christian guys, okay. [close the umbrella] But, you know, when I'm with, you now, these other guys. [open the umbrella] Oh, when I'm with those girls, oh yeah. These are good girls. Oh, these are good girls. [close the umbrella] But when I'm with, you know, some other girls, well, we'll go to other places and talk about other stuff."

Worship is an all-encompassing thing. Worship is meant to totally dominate everything we're about, because we understand we're glorifying and pleasing and reflecting the nature and the character of God.

"Wait, wait a minute, Aaron. Okay. If I'm under this authority deal, what if someone is asking me to do stuff that is immoral, illegal, or against God's word?" We'll talk about that next time. But generally speaking, most of the leaders that we deal with, most of the authority structures that we deal with, are not asking us to do stuff that's illegal, or immoral, or against God's word.

But so often, just because it's hard, we say, "Oh, it's too hard. I'm going to leave. Oh, it's too hard. I'm going to leave." And then we say, "Man, I'm going to do my own thing. I'm going to be my own boss. I'm going to call my own shots." And we're signing up for waves and sharks and pirates. And we're signing up for losing our life. And we don't want to go there. Ultimately, the safest place, the most energizing place, the most adventure-filled place, is to be under the authority of God.

Maybe you wonder, "Well, man, why isn't my life blessed?" God is not going to bless your life or mine until we're positionally in the blessed place, until positionally we're under his authority.

So here's some quick homework. Over the next week, look at the situations you find yourself in, at work, at home, at the restaurant, on the basketball court, wherever, and begin to identify authority in that situation. Begin to think how you put yourself under that authority, and what might come of that.

And, if you've done the pushback and jumped in the kayak and gone Gabriel, just make a U-turn and paddle back to the foundation of authority. This is where the best version of your life begins. And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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