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called beyond

#### AUTHOR

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#### RESOURCE

## Four Postures of Spiritual Authority

#### ABSTRACT

The essence of leadership is not found in expertise, knowledge, or personality. At the core, real leadership is all about influence. True influence flows out of spiritual authority.

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## Introduction

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 what you find 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 spiritual authority. The posture of our lives determines whether or not we are positioned to receive the spiritual authority God desires to develop in us. In many ways, it is part of the "inside-out" counter-intuitive nature of the kingdom.

The question is, how do we actually position ourselves 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?

There are at least four postures of spiritual authority.

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First, a word of caution. Each of these four postures runs contrary to that which comes “naturally” for most of us. You will find that they confront fundamental aspects of our sin nature. They also run upstream against the current of cultural notions regarding leadership. In each case, it is easy to minimize our personal tendencies rather than pay the price to cultivate these attitudes.

## #1. The Posture of Surrender

- Surrender is about giving up the reigns of authority, submitting to him who sits on the throne, and choosing to trust him completely.
- The posture of surrender confronts our desire to find security in being in charge, our belief that we are safe when we call the shots.
- It is not a once-for-all decision, but the ongoing experience of yielding more and more of the authority over my life to the Lord of my life.
- It forces me to face my fear of releasing control.
- Surrender challenges me to admit that, just like Adam, my deepest desire is to be like God, to be the ruler of my own domain.
- The core question of surrender is, “Will I trust him enough to release control?”

## #2. The Posture of Alignment

- Alignment is about conforming priorities and our lives to His plans.
- The posture of alignment confronts the fact that we love our own ideas, we love to do things our own way, and in our hearts, we would like God to bless them.
- Sometimes, we present our plans to God, invite him to share his thoughts with us and then begin to negotiate. This means asking the King of the universe to compromise his plans by adopting ours.
- When we act this way, we are in effect saying to God, “Follow me, I 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 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?”

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## #3. The Posture of Brokenness

- Brokenness is the painful process of separating us from our dependence on experience, skill, giftedness, curriculums, programs, etc.
- The posture of brokenness confronts our reliance on expertise.
- It is Peter and John in Acts 3, admitting that what others need goes beyond anything we can provide ourselves.
- It is the upside-down message of Paul throughout 1 and 2 Corinthians. “We preach a gospel of foolishness... We have this treasure in (cheap) jars of clay... So that I might know that it is His all-surpassing power... So that His power might be seen in my weakness.”
- A broken leader is one who is no longer impressed with their giftedness or competency and learned minister in absolute dependence on the work of God for anything of significance.
- Brokenness is freeing. It releases us to utilize our skills and expertise without believing that our influence comes from them.
- It interrupts our desire for people to be impressed with us and compels us to long for them to see Jesus instead.
- Brokenness challenges us to let go of the need to be known for “the great stuff we do.”
- The core question of brokenness is, “What will I 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.
- The posture of vulnerability confronts my desire to avoid being needy.
- It demonstrates that I am not someone who has arrived or has mastered life. I am only a dependent servant in partnership with Jesus.
- Vulnerability admits that I need those I am here to serve, maybe more than they need me.
- While transparency means letting people see beneath my polished veneer, vulnerability lets go of any attempt to manage or dress up such disclosure.
- Transparency says, I have been there, I understand, I am like you. Vulnerability says, I am still there. It means telling the story while it is unfinished, while I don't look like the hero.
- The core question of vulnerability is, “Will I let people see the unpolished process of God's work in my life? Or, will I try to manage the facade?”

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## The Point

These four postures position a leader for the development of true spiritual authority because they position God to shine through us in real time. Leaders willing to assume these postures discover an impact on others that goes way beyond the transactional content of a moment. They begin to cherish the lasting influence that flows out of who they are, and all God is doing.

In a world saturated with the superficiality of manipulative advertising and overly managed messaging, people are starving for the leaders who are the real deal. They long for leaders who will live and lead with true authority. The question is, will we be those leaders?

## Consider...

Which of these four postures is the hardest for you these days?

What has God been doing in your life recently to address it? That is, what people, circumstances, or events has God allowed into your life to develop this posture and how are you responding to his efforts?

## About the Author

Since 1997 Gary Mayes has served as a missionary to the church and those who lead her. In his role as Executive Director of ChurchNEXT, Gary touches a worldwide effort, equipping leaders to mobilize the church that is and pioneer the church of tomorrow.

Gary has written five books, most recently, *DNA of a Revolution*. He also writes a blog for leaders as one way to give away lessons he's learned about leadership that no one ever taught us in school.

Gary's Blog: [www.aboutleading.org](http://www.aboutleading.org)