

## *Use Your Authority for God's Sake*

“Jesus didn’t tell his followers to pray for the sick,” Healing Prayer Rooms California director Rick Taylor noted recently; “he told them to heal the sick.”

Now, there’s a concept!

For the record, Jesus “called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and heal every disease and every sickness,” instructing them to “heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, heal those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases, and drive out demons.” (Matt. 10:1,8).

What would it mean for us to exercise our authority as Jesus’ followers today?

Some years ago, a young ministry intern mentioned to me that his father had fallen ill and the doctors couldn’t find what was wrong with him. A few weeks later, I called and asked how his father was doing. “Not so good,” he sighed. “Dad’s been in the hospital awhile now and just keeps getting worse. The doctors still don’t know what to do. They’re worried he’s not going to make it.”

I asked him if he had organized others to pray for his dad.

“Oh, yes,” he declared. “I’ve got the whole church praying, and all my friends everywhere. But Dad’s still getting worse.”

Sensing something amiss, I prayed quietly. *Lord, do you want me to push this?* Hesitating, I eased ahead. “How are they praying?”

“What do you mean?” the young man snapped, knitting his brow. “They’re asking God to heal him, of course!”

“That’s good,” I allowed, “but it may not be the best. Has anyone taken authority over his sickness?”

“‘Authority’?” he echoed, puzzled.

“Yes,” I declared. “Has anyone gone to the hospital, laid hands upon your father and spoken to the sickness in the Name of Jesus and told it to leave him?”

Taken aback, the young man hesitated. “Well,...no, not really. I mean, I never thought of that.”

“Since nothing else is working, somebody’d better think of it soon,” I urged. “And I suggest it be you!”

Some time later, I called again and asked for an update. “Well, I did go and do like you said and take authority over his sickness,” the young man replied matter-of-factly. “The doctors never did figure out what he had, but Dad’s out of the hospital and doing fine.”

“Hallelujah!” I exclaimed. “What a great experience for you to minister to your dad like that!”

“Well,” he scoffed, “I don’t think my prayer really had that much to do with it--we’re all just praising God that he’s better.”

Astonished, dismayed, I realized that this born-again Christian on the threshold of ordained ministry—together with a host of believing friends--had no context in which to affirm this authority Jesus had given him. They could all ask God to heal someone, but to speak healing in the Name of Jesus did not compute. Even when the young man did exercise that authority and the person was healed, he could not entertain its significance.

Little kids beg Daddy to do everything for them. But if the relationship with Daddy is intact and vital, the children grow up and take responsibility to exercise their giftings. To do so honors the father, as evidence that he has done his job well. As maturing Christians, that is, we become cautious of asking God to do what He has given us authority to do. Beyond begging God to heal others, to expel or bind the Enemy, we must be prepared ourselves to speak that healing, to command that deliverance in the Name of Jesus. This honors Father God. It's evidence that He has done His job well, that we are appropriating the full measure of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Certainly, no one knows just how much this young man's prayer of authority contributed to his father's healing. Very likely, everyone else's prayers also figured in. The roots of physical illness, emotional brokenness, and spiritual oppression can be complex, even mysterious; God can heal any way He wants, whether someone prays with authority or not. But while authoritative prayer is not the only means for God to heal, it is a powerful and all-too-often ignored part of biblically-based ministry. Like all genuine prayer, it's not a formula to get what we want, but a relationship that allows God to get what He wants—and often more than we seek.

Amid these mysteries, I'd rather speak with authority and have nothing apparent happen, than withdraw from it when something of God could've happened. When at last I meet Him face-to-face, I want to ask God in many instances, "Why didn't you exercise Your saving power?" I don't want Him to respond, "Why didn't *you* exercise the authority I gave you?"

The answer for many Christians may be that their childhood experience of authority, often with their fathers, was painful and fearful. When you know your father loves you, you do what he says readily, because you know it's best for you. If the security of Daddy's love has been violated, however, as by harsh punishment or abandonment, you grow up distrusting authority. If you don't take this father-wound to Jesus for healing, it becomes your natural default. When you grow up and move into positions of authority yourself, you may simply treat others as you were treated—either judging and coercing or simply withdrawing and abandoning. Thus, you miss the essential distinction between *authoritative*—as one called and empowered by God to call forth His good purposes in others, and *authoritarian*--as one driven by self-centered desires to bully others into his/her own goals.

Without that healing, praying with authority feels arrogant and egotistical, and we withdraw from it, like the ministry intern, in order to remain humble. "Humble, schmumble!" I can imagine Jesus shout. "Pick up the sword I died to give you, and use it!" To humbly reject the world's applause is one thing; to "humbly" reject the call of God is quite another.

In fact, because God is love, (1 John 4:7-21) all love relationships bear divine authority to the lover. By its very nature, love opens our hearts to each other and allows, even begs, for authoritative input. The child's heart cries out, "Daddy/Mommy, tell me that I'm loveable and capable!" and the spouse, "Honey, show me that I'm worthy of your love and respect."

The lover who abdicates this authority abandons, and thereby deeply wounds the beloved--like a gardener who fails to water the plant. We can choose to withdraw from, abuse, or exercise faithfully our authority over loved ones, but we cannot choose to have no authority in their lives. What you speak or don't speak of them, speaks *into* them, shaping their self-image.

Authority spoken negatively, as in "You'll never amount to anything," is a binding curse. Ask Jesus to identify any such curse on you, set the cross between you and the speaker and in the Name of Jesus break it and nail it to the cross. Claim the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from its effects, and reclaim God's authority by speaking the truth of who you are in His sight.

Authority spoken positively, whether over heart, body, or spirit, is a blessing. Use it.

