

Prophet: This Doctrine of Demons Is Rapidly Infecting the Church

A doctrine of demons has been circulating in the church in recent years that has been gaining increasing traction. Cloaked in robes of false righteousness and even claims of prophetic inspiration, but born in rebellion, it appeals to something in our culture that undermines and despises the leadership God has anointed and appointed. Wherever it goes, it weakens, divides and destroys.

It's the idea that because we are all equal, there should be no "hierarchy" of leaders in the body of Christ. Somehow, people have gotten the idea that the churches and ministries should be governed by a team of "co-equal" elders. Let me begin by saying that everywhere I've seen this unbalanced and unbiblical philosophy applied, it has ultimately resulted in ministry failures, wounds and broken relationships. I realize that this doctrine of governance grew out of reactions to leaders who have led with domination and control or for self-exaltation, but the existence of abuses by leaders who missed the heart of God can never justify rejection of the kind of order Scripture actually mandates. Today, tragically, this unbiblical idea of church governance has gone beyond a reaction to abuses and has become an infection spreading into places where leadership has not been abusive or controlling. Good leaders are being diminished and dishonored. The body of Christ is being weakened.

In point of fact, every successful ministry of which I have been aware over 42 years of professional pastoral ministry in multiple nations—and so many churches I've lost count—has been overseen by an anointed leader whom everyone recognizes and

submits to. In some cases, a team of elders claimed to be co-equal, but the obvious dynamic was always that one person rose to be the recognized driver of the vision. By dint of character, service and anointing, that person led with an authority everyone willingly followed.

God called Moses to lead. Moses had a team in Aaron and Miriam who demanded equality in Numbers 12 and were sternly rebuked by God for it. "Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Has He not spoken also by us?" Numbers 12:2b). God's response came immediately: "And the anger of the Lord burned against them, and He set out. When the cloud went away from over the tabernacle, Miriam became leprous as snow, and Aaron turned toward Miriam and saw that she was leprous" (Num. 12:9-10).

The issue was never whether or not Aaron and Miriam heard from God. The issue was that they sought to pull Moses down from his appointed place of authority. Legitimate challenges to those in leadership are legal and necessary. Any good leader humbly holds his heart open to such things, but the spirit that seeks to pull a leader down to the level of false equality brings the judgment of God. When people in a ministry begin to behave like Aaron and Miriam toward the authority God has established, then, unless repentance comes quickly, ministries fail and die of spiritual leprosy.

The apostle Paul, a man anointed of God for leadership in the church, traveled with a team over which he clearly exercised godly authority. The churches he planted knew him as their apostle, and he expected obedience from them, not simply because he carried a mandate from God, but because he had led them with the heart of a father. In Philippians 2:12 he wrote, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but so much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." On the basis of having fathered the church in Corinth in Christ, he carried the authority to discipline the people there. First he wrote, "For

if you were to have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers. In Christ Jesus I have become a father to you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15) and then verse 21, "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and in the spirit of meekness?"

Without a doubt, Paul's spiritual son, Timothy, functioned as the pastor in authority over the church in Ephesus, even while working with elders who served as his team. Paul wrote both I and II Timothy to exhort him to pick up his authority and exercise it, not allowing anyone to despise his youth in doing so. Timothy carried the authority to discipline elders who served under him (I Timothy 5:19-20). To Titus Paul delegated authority to "appoint elders" (Titus 1:5) and set the church in order. God never intended the church to be a democracy.

See Ephesians 4:11-13: "He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Or Hebrews 13:17, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who must give an account. Let them do this with joy and not complaining, for that would not be profitable to you." Focus on the word "unprofitable." It implies loss when God's appointed authority is not respected.

Isn't it clear that God has established a structure of leadership and authority in the church and that He has commanded us to work within it? It has nothing to do with equality of persons. We are all sinners made saints by the blood of Jesus, but in order to destroy the people of God, the enemy of our soul has twisted the idea of equality into something God never intended. Leaders are never superior to those they lead. They merely occupy a place of authority for

which God will hold them accountable. In fact, the task of a good leader is to equip, enable and elevate those he leads. The heart of a real father longs for his children to rise higher in what they do than he ever could. This is why Jesus promised in John 14:12: that we would do the works He did and greater works than He did. He showed us the Father's heart and revealed what a real leader does. Good leaders don't keep people under. They rather lift them higher.

We live in a day of doctrines of demons and destructive heresies as prophesied in the Word of God. Some of them undermine core doctrines of our faith. Others chip away at the structures God ordained for the leadership of His people. Let us be on guard. And, leaders! Lead with the heart of the Father and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's not about you. {eoa}

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