

Biblical Perspectives: Speaking with Authority

by Carrie Cavanaugh



The Bible is clear that with authority comes responsibility. Specifically, when God gives someone power over others, he requires that they rule justly. When one understands that all authority is given by God and thus leaders act on God's behalf, it is more clear why justice is so important in leadership. Not only is it morally right to treat others well, but it is also a witness to the world of who Christ is, the perfect judge.

Although as a ministry leader, you don't have as much power as the kings of old did, still you hold great power over your staff in terms of meeting out justice or injustice. And one of the primary means of executing justice is through speech:

The lips of a king speak as an oracle, and his mouth should not betray justice. Proverbs 16:10

By describing the words of the king as an oracle, Solomon is emphasizing the power of the king's words to bring about that which they foretell, not any supernatural quality. That is, a king's desire is obeyed. Likewise, in your organization, your staff find direction from what you communicate.

Although the first part of the Proverb is set forth as fact, the second half is an affirmation of how God designed things to be in the ideal. That is, although even evil tyrants are obeyed, they don't always speak justly. Yet everyone sees the travesty in this misuse of power. It is this second

half of the verse then that is telling about your leadership. Indeed,

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

Our saving faith in Christ is manifested in our bringing justice to

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this fallen world and thus proclaiming Jesus' kingdom rule here and now.

Although this proverb presents authority as foundational and justice as something merely to be hoped for, the story of Solomon's wise counsel proves that they are intimately connected. God had once come to Solomon offering to bless him with power or wealth, but Solomon asked for wisdom and indeed God blessed him with wisdom. This wisdom allowed Solomon to judge justly, even in difficult cases where it was the word of one mother against another claiming that the child before them was their own. Solomon of course found a way to reveal the true

mother and thus issue justice. The scriptures explain the people's response

When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice. 1 Kings 3:28

Thus, justice bolsters power. God blesses the authority of those who lead according to His plan.

What does it actually mean to speak justly in the workplace? Surely it is giving honor where honor is due. This takes humility for a leader to step out of the spotlight and highlight the work of their staff members, but it is both right and advantageous.

Speaking justly may also be about fighting for fair wages, benefits, and balanced work-hours of your staff.

As hard as it is, speaking justly requires Christian ministry leaders to confront staff who are conducting their work in unethical ways. And I would dare to say that it often means confronting brothers and sisters in Christ at the workplace for sins in their life in general.

Finally, speaking justly requires us to communicate expectations for honest and god-honoring work practices to our staff. Although many Christian organizations naturally have high standards of conduct because of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts

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of their staff, it is important to remember that we are not yet glorified. It's so easy to rationalize things, or genuinely overlook the consequences our actions may bring on others. Therefore, as leaders, we need to take the initiative to train our staff in just work tactics.

This list is not exhaustive. Please keep justice in mind as you communicate in your workplace. It may seem like just an everyday office meeting, but really it's an opportunity to proclaim the praises of our Just Judge—Christ.