

"By What Authority – Part 1 "

with Seventy Richard Neill

Adult Study Class Study Notes

November 9th, 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9dQK9pLI88>

<https://www.livinghopebranch.org/by-what-authority-part-1/>

Summary

In part 1 of a 3-part study class, Richard Neill explores the multifaceted concept of authority, emphasizing its spiritual, moral, and societal dimensions. Authority is presented as a fundamental yet complex word, often misunderstood, resisted, or misapplied. Richard draws on scriptural insights from the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants, as well as historical and personal anecdotes, to deepen understanding of authority's rightful place in human and divine relationships. He highlights that authority is not merely power but a divinely sanctioned right "to be obeyed," rooted in guidance, respect, and responsibility.

The class challenges participants to reflect on personal experiences with authority—including parental, educational, governmental, and ecclesiastical—and to recognize that all individuals possess authority through agency. Richard underscores the essential role of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice in restoring humanity's relationship with God and thus restoring true authority in life. He also emphasizes the critical influence and authority of women, particularly in the restoration and nurturing of faith communities.

Concluding with a call to embrace God-given authority fully, Richard ties the concept to foundational principles of freedom and governance, referencing the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution as examples of authority ordained to protect liberty. The class invites introspection, repentance, and renewed commitment to honoring rightful authority as a pathway to personal and collective spiritual strength and unity.

Highlights

1. **Authority is a divine right to be obeyed**, distinct from mere power, and integral to spiritual and social order.
2. **Everyone inherently possesses authority through agency**, which must be exercised with wisdom and goodness.
3. **The scriptures frequently address authority**, emphasizing obedience to God as the ultimate authority.
4. **Jesus Christ's atonement is central** to restoring humanity's access to God's authority despite human shortcomings.
5. **Women hold profound and often underappreciated authority** within families, the church, and communities.
6. **Respecting authority across various life spheres**—including parents, teachers, government, and church leaders—is essential for harmony and growth.
7. **Foundational principles of freedom and governance**, such as those in the Declaration of Independence, are grounded in the acceptance and proper exercise of authority.

Key Insights

1. **Authority vs. Power:** Richard distinguishes authority as “that which ought of right to be obeyed,” versus power, which “must be obeyed.” This distinction elevates authority as inherently linked to moral and divine legitimacy rather than coercion, inspiring a higher standard for leadership and obedience.
2. **Agency as Authority:** Every person’s agency—the freedom to choose—is itself a form of authority granted by God. This insight empowers individuals to see their choices as expressions of divine trust and responsibility, encouraging accountability in personal decisions and in how they influence others.
3. **The Role of Authority in Childhood and Education:** Richard’s experience as an educator highlights the importance of structured, consistent authority in nurturing growth and order. Understanding and accepting authority in early life sets a foundation for lifelong respect for rightful leaders and laws.
4. **The Spiritual Authority of Women:** The class elevates the often-overlooked spiritual authority of women, from mothers to key historical figures like Emma Smith, emphasizing their critical role in sustaining faith and leadership within the church and society. This challenges traditional views and inspires greater appreciation and empowerment of women.
5. **Authority in Scripture and Covenants:** The class reminds us that the Ten Commandments and Jesus’s summary of the law (love of God and neighbor) are rooted in authority that transcends time and culture. This provides a timeless framework for understanding divine authority as the foundation for moral living.
6. **Human Rebellion and the Need for Christ’s Atonement:** Acknowledging that by nature humans tend to rebel against authority, Richard points to Jesus Christ’s sacrifice as the necessary means to restore the broken relationship between God and humanity, thereby restoring authority’s rightful place. This offers hope and a path to redemption.
7. **Authority as a Source of Unity and Strength:** By embracing true authority—God’s authority and the divinely established order—individuals and communities can become a “force to be reckoned with” in the world. This inspires believers to recommit to obedience and service as means to spiritual and societal renewal.

Conclusion

Authority is framed as essential not only for understanding scripture but also for personal spiritual development and the functioning of church leadership and governance. Richard’s approach is both scholarly and pastoral, incorporating scriptural study, historical literature, and interactive dialogue to address the multifaceted nature of authority.