



## Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

### Lesson 10: God's Plan of Authority

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#### INTRODUCTION

1. What are some common names, titles, images, and metaphors for leaders? What does each of these convey about the nature of leadership? \_\_\_\_\_

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Many people in our culture are highly suspicious of authority. After all, it can be used to oppress, abuse, and denigrate people. The fact that authority is so often abused has led some people to regard authority itself as inherently evil. But, as we'll see from Scripture in this study, authority itself is a good gift from God that reflects His rule over us.

#### MAIN IDEA

Authority is a good gift from God that reflects His rule over us. From God's revelation of Himself as Shepherd, we learn of His compassion, tenderness, faithfulness, justice, and loving care for every single one of His people.

#### DIGGING IN

We will look at three main passages below to see what God has revealed about His plan of authority.

In Daniel 4, God sends Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, out into the wilderness. God throws him down from his high place and causes him to live as a wild beast, so that he would know who was truly in charge in the universe. Here's what Nebuchadnezzar says at the end of that period:

#### Daniel 4:34–35.

1. What does Nebuchadnezzar confess about God's dominion and kingdom in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What does Nebuchadnezzar say about God's relationship to people? How would you describe that relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How does your heart react to this kind of language, to the idea that God rules over everything and does all that he pleases in heaven and on earth? \_\_\_\_\_

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In Genesis 1, we read about how God created the whole universe, including the earth and humankind. Here's what God said when He created humans:

**Genesis 1:26–28.**

1. In whose image is man created (v. 26)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What does the fact of being made in the image of God mean for man's relationship to creation (vv. 26, 28)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What do we learn about authority from this passage? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. In a number of different places in Scripture, God gives special kinds of authority to specific groups of people. Read each of the following passages:

**Romans 13:1–7.** To whom does God grant authority? What does He grant them authority to do? What response does God require from those who are under this authority? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Ephesians 6:1–4.** To whom does God grant authority? What does He grant them authority to do? What response does God require from those who are under this authority? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Hebrews 13:7, 17.** To whom does God grant authority? What does He grant them authority to do? What response does God require from those who are under this authority? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. In light of the passages above, how would you respond to someone who thought that authority itself is a bad thing? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Ezekiel 34 is a sweeping passage. In it, God condemns the wickedness of the shepherds of Israel, reveals His own character as the shepherd of His people, and promises to deliver His people in the future.

**Ezekiel 34:1–24.**

1. In verses 1–4, what have the shepherds of Israel done? What have they not done (vv. 1–4)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What has happened to the people of Israel as a result (vv. 5–6)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What is God’s attitude toward the shepherds? What is He going to do to them (vv. 7–10)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. In verses 11–16, there is a list of things God promises to do for His sheep. What does this reveal about God’s promise to His sheep? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What does God’s promise to gather and feed His sheep reveal about His character (vv. 11–14)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What does God’s promise to seek the lost, bring back the strayed, and strengthen the weak reveal about His character (vv. 15–16)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What does God’s promise to destroy the fat and the strong (who have made themselves so by abusing others, vv. 1–6) and to feed His sheep in justice reveal about His character (v. 16)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. What does God’s revelation of Himself as the shepherd of His people teach us about how we should relate to Him? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. Whom does God promise to set up over His flock when He rescues them (vv. 22–24)? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. How does God fulfill this promise? (Hint: See Jeremiah 23:5–6; Luke 1:32–33; and John 10:11–18.)<sup>1</sup> \_\_

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<sup>1</sup> Bobby Jamieson, *Leading One Another: Church Leadership*, ed. Mark Dever, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 42.