

## Moral Authority

### 1. The Right to be Heard

- A. We feel that because we have **truth** on our side, we have a right to speak. And we do, he who speaks God's truth speaks with His authority – 1 Th 4:8: *"he who rejects this does not reject man, but God ..."*.
- B. But what about our right to be **heard**? Upon what basis should we expect people of the world or in the Lord's church to listen to us? Our right to be heard – that is, heard with *believability* – comes from moral authority, not a title, badge, uniform, entourage, rhetorical skills, wealth, etc.
- C. Not to bash Jesse Jackson but to focus on principles being acknowledged by secular authors concerning his situation:
  - 1. See Leonard Pitts excerpt. Others are suggesting that Jesse has lost his moral authority or it has been severely compromised.
  - 2. But what has changed? Granting that Jesse's "issues" were valid, the issues are still the same. *What has changed is Jesse's **credibility**.*
  - 3. When you take on a leadership role and urge moral/spiritual standards upon others, you take on a higher obligation to *practice* what you *preach*. **Christians occupy a leadership role because of our own acknowledgment that we understand the truth of God's word.**

### 2. A Lack of Integrity

- A. The Pharisees' lack of integrity: Mt 23:3-4. They were inwardly corrupt while trying to maintain outward piety: 23:27-28. This inward corruption can often be sensed even before an "outing" event.
- B. The hypocrisy of the religious elite hurts us all.
  - 1. It fuels cynicism: "All religious people are hypocrites." This is precisely how Christianity is portrayed in the media. We are often seen in this light.
  - 2. Cynicism gives way to apathy: We don't care what our leaders do, how they live (we know their religion is a sham), so long as they represent my cause. We then begin to elect leaders regardless of their moral/spiritual destitution.
  - 3. Vicious circle: We elect/admire people who act like us, and this justifies us.

C. Jesus challenged his enemies: “*Which of you convicts Me of sin?*” (Jn 8:46).

### 3. Holding the High Ground of Moral Authority

A. Consistency – Ecc 10:1. We will be held to a higher standard; the world may do something and it won’t be noticed because it’s *expected*, but if we do it ... **A modern illustration:** A little water or sugar in gas tank ...

B. Character may win others when words won’t – 1 Pet 3:1. No guarantee, however. But words *certainly won’t win* the lost without character.

C. Sometimes moral authority may be lost *through no fault of our own*: Jesus was accused of being a gluttonous partyer – Lk 7:33-34. Jesus **did what was right** even when it was *perceived* to be wrong. **Reputation is not the be-all and end-all; doing right is.** Some will defame us as “evil doers” – 1 Pet 3:16.

### Conclusion:

1. What does the world see in us? Profanity? Industry? Temper? Lust for fleshly entertainment? Inconsistency? Cheating?
2. Are we giving the gospel every chance to impact an increasingly callous world by our pure and godly actions?