

It's time to claim our communities for God—and then reach out to our region!

Blessings and MYESE!

## **Part 21: Elevate Your Life!**

**Texts:**

**Ephesians 2:6 (NIV)** - *“God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”*

**Luke 9:1 (NIV)** - “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.”

- A. Last week we spoke about exercising our spiritual authority to change a season.
1. We had such an incredible move of God at the close of the service, I don't remember when I've been so blessed! You really can change your life by changing your season!
  2. Today I want to speak about using spiritual authority to change a community—and then our world.
  3. While the 8th and 9th levels of spiritual authority are very different, they are so closely related, we will discuss the two of them together.

### **“Authority Over Communities” and “Authority Over Regions”**

- B. Notice the message in these New Testament verses:

1. **Acts 1:8 (NIV)** - "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
  - a. The world is comprised of many small communities—when joined together form regions.
  - b. From the community of Jerusalem, then spreading to Judea, the early believers began preaching the message of Christ's resurrection.
2. Jesus told the disciples to witness first in their community and from there, the Gospel would impact every region of the world.
  - a. **Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV)** - "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. [2] And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3] Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
  - b. Before the Holy Spirit filled the 120 believers gathered in the Upper Room, the HOUSE was filled first!
  - c. Had we been speaking about the **weather** rather than the Holy Spirit, we would have said the room had reached **100% humidity!** In other words, the atmosphere had become so saturated with moisture, precipitation naturally occurred.
  - d. The room where Jesus' followers were sitting became so saturated with the Holy Spirit, every person was filled to overflowing!
3. **Acts 13:46-47 (NKJV)** - "Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. [47] For so the Lord has commanded us:"

- a. Even though both communities resided in the same city, Paul announced that because the Jewish people had hardened their hearts toward God, he was turning to the Gentile community, who were much more receptive to the Gospel.
- b. The Gentiles recognized and honored Paul's authority and position as a minister of God—more than his own people. As a result, the great Apostle Paul became **our** apostle, the apostle to the Gentiles.
- c. Consequently, God redirected His Spirit from impacting the Jewish community to impacting all the regions of the world.
- d. Thank God, He did—or you and I wouldn't be saved today!

C. How does authority over communities differ from authority over regions? And how would this affect believers of our day?

- 1. "Authority over communities" could have several definitions. As when Paul turned to the Gentiles, a community could indicate a particular **ethnicity**.
  - a. While preaching in New York, I love to eat in two well-known ethnic communities--China Town and Little Italy.
  - b. Various communities can exist in the same city or town--and even the same neighborhood.
- 2. A community can be comprised of people from the same socio-economic strata, vocation, age, gender, culture, interests, etc.
- 3. Or a community can refer to a certain geographical area. For example, we are Houstonians, but Christian Tabernacle is located in East Houston.
- 4. Each of us belongs to one or more communities, some of which we can identify with better than others.
  - a. For instance, I belong to the Christian community at large because I am a believer. Yet I would identify more closely with Spirit-filled believers than those from a liturgical background. So, I am a member of the "Spirit-filled community."

- b. However, I also belong to the Cajun community who trace their ancestry to a melting pot of cultures along the Louisiana bayous. Beyond that, my family members were natives of Nova Scotia, Canada, and preceding that era, to France.
  - c. Of course, I also belong to a community of citizens who are somewhat *north* of their middle adult years.
  - d. I also belong to a community of Houston sports enthusiasts who enjoy recreational diving. Within that group, is a smaller community of divers known as underwater photographers.
  - e. I am also a member of the human community who comprise half of the population of our planet, known as *males*.
  - f. Last, I belong to a vocational group known as ministers of the Gospel. And within that community, I am a pastor rather than an evangelist or itinerant teacher.
5. Each community has experienced certain things that others do not share. These experiences frame our perspective of life. Because the views of each community differ, we don't always understand or respect the views of others as we should.

6. **Joke: Speaking Spanish?**

People in the U.S. often get a bad rap for being unsympathetic. But, that's not really true. Americans give more to charitable causes than any other nation on earth.

While in the U.S., a visitor from Latin America goes to watch his favorite soccer team touring here in the states. But when Jose arrives at the stadium, unfortunately the game is sold out and he doesn't have a ticket. But he spies a large pole and decides to climb to the top to get a bird's eye view of the game. Just as he reaches the top, the crowd rises to sing the National Anthem.

After it ended, Jose's buddies asked how he enjoyed the game and he replies, "I don't know why you all don't think Americans are nice to Latin

- Americans. As soon as I climbed that pole and got situated, everyone turned around, looked at me, and started singing, 'Jose, can you see?'"
7. Some communities seem to be more open or sensitive to God than others. In Europe, the greatest moves of God are now among the African people who have settled there.
  8. I once spoke at a meeting attended by several Asian communities. To be understood by all, I'll never forget having to speak through a number of translators.
    - a. If I remember correctly, the message had to be translated in seven different languages—Thai, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and some I've forgotten. After speaking just a few words, I had to wait until each translator, one at a time, repeated what I had said. It seemed like it took five minutes to just say hello!
    - b. As one of the men was translating, (I believe it was Vietnamese), God's Spirit began to touch his heart. He asked if I would stop for a moment and let him explain to his people what I was preaching. Until then, he had only carefully repeated what I had said. But after God touched him, he took about 10 minutes to repeat my message and then turned to say, "We are ready to pray." So, I gave the altar call and every single Vietnamese person came forward for salvation. I can assure you, we had revival that night!
    - c. What really amazed me was that while some of the other nationalities came to surrender their hearts to God, the breakthrough among the Vietnamese was incredible. Every single one of them gave their heart to God! I believe that what I saw was a "community breakthrough!"
    - d. I've watched that happen in families, as well. One member comes to God and begins to pray for their family. The next thing you know, the whole family is saved!

D. We can—and must—change our communities!

1. America is in deep trouble! Our various heritages are being stolen and replaced by an anti-God, anti-Bible culture. The enemy is waging a war for the hearts of our communities.
2. We must never allow our culture, our particular tribe, ethnicity, or nation to be captured by the kingdom of darkness.
3. God has given us the authority to challenge our cultures and nation when they get off course and help them embrace the purposes for which God created them.
4. Because we are agents of change, we have a God-given authority to impact our communities.
  - a. **Matthew 5:13-16 ( NIV)** - "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. [14] "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. [16] In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."
  - b. In **Luke 13:20-21 (NIV)**, Jesus asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? [21] It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."
  - c. Yeast has a habit of taking over! It will never peacefully coexist.
5. This is why Jesus would not allow the man who had been delivered from a legion of demons to travel with Him.
  - a. **Luke 8:39 (NKJV)** - "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and

proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.”

- b. Jesus sent the man home so he could impact his community. Later, when Jesus passed through the area, everyone came to hear Him.
- c. **Luke 8:40 (NIV)** - “Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.”
- d. In fact, **Luke 8:42 (NIV)** says that the crowds almost crushed Him!

E. Authority over a region is quite different than a single community.

- 1. This type authority will impact every community within the entire region.
- 2. A region could be a city, a state, or even a nation.
- 3. We often get all excited about impacting a region—but that's not the way it begins. It starts with a single community.
  - a. Think of Lenin and the Marxist revolution that swept the world. Before it ended, one-third of the world had converted to Communism.
  - b. But that's not how it started. I have preached the Gospel on a university campus in Kazan, Russia where Lenin began the Communist revolution with just 17 followers.
- 4. Cities are larger than communities; counties are larger than cities; states and provinces are larger than counties; and nations are much larger than states or provinces. But the beginning stage is a community, and it expands from there.
- 5. The Bible tells us that the early Christian community did not remain in the Upper Room. In fact, **Acts 5:28 (NKJV)** says their enemies accused the disciples of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine!
- 6. Jesus said the church must reach **all** of Judea and Samaria. Those geographical regions were much larger than cities. He saw the Gospel surpassing communities to reach entire regions—and finally, the world!

- a. **Acts 1:8 (NIV)** - "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
7. This always reminds me of Peter Wagner's story about two South American countries whose borders went right down the main street of a particular city. The nation of Argentina had experienced a great spiritual breakthrough, but the other remained under spiritual bondage. A church on the Argentina side of this city decided to conduct a major outreach. People on their side of the street eagerly accepted tracts and literature, but on the other side, the literature was refused and thrown on the ground. However, when those who had refused the tracts would cross to the Argentina side of the street, they would pick them up and read them.
8. Sweden, Norway, and other Scandinavian countries, once known as Vikings, were some of the most brutal, paganistic people who ever lived. My dad's relatives on his father's side were originally Scandinavian Vikings from Norway.
  - a. The origin of the word "berserk" was to describe how the Vikings would go crazy on the battle field in a blood lust of mayhem and destruction. They were called "berserkers."
  - b. The common drinking toast "skool" is actually derived from their practice of killing their enemies, beheading them, and drinking liquor from their skulls—hence, the word "skool" or skull.
  - c. But that all changed when missionaries arrived with the Gospel in the mid-twelfth century. Entire nations became Christian and laid down their weapons.
  - d. Norway, one of these Scandinavian nations, is actually where the Nobel Peace Prize originated for outstanding achievements by those who contributed to a better quality of life on earth.
9. The Maori Islanders of the Pacific were equally as fierce. They built long, heavy war canoes and launched them by laying their captives' bodies in a

row and then pushing the canoes across the bodies into the water. As the canoes passed over the living prisoners, the blood from their crushed bodies would lubricate the sand to make it easier to launch the weighty canoes.

F. What caused such profound changes among these wicked cultures? Someone used their God-given authority to produce a spiritual breakthrough by unseating the principalities that had long ruled their communities!

1. This agrees with Paul's teaching to the Ephesians about various levels of spiritual opposition that can control a region.
2. **Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)** - "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."
3. The government of the kingdom of darkness is so chaotic and highly organized, it causes destruction everywhere the Kingdom of God does not confront it.
4. The terms Paul uses in this verse are not redundant; he is referring to a hierarchical order of government:
  - a. "Principalities" are local magistrates or rulers of small communities.
  - b. "Powers" are regional potentates over districts. A district is comprised of several communities.
  - c. "Rulers" are lords over domains. A domain consists of several districts.
  - d. "Hosts" (plural) of wickedness are rulers over domain leaders, which are the "generals" of evil.
  - e. Obviously, the chief leader of the group was the enemy himself.

G. How does this apply to believers?

1. You belong to a community. Whether it's a family, a team, ethnicity, or profession, you have been given authority within that community.
2. As the “gate keeper” of communities in which you participate, you were meant to control everything that enters its gates.
3. If your workplace is filled with darkness, there's no reason to change jobs. Simply **change** those you work with.
4. There's no need to exchange a family member for someone else; just **change** your family.
5. To change the world, we must first change the community or communities in which we participate.
6. God intended that our authority produce change and revival. Like a fire out of control, a community will then engulf a region—and finally, spread to the nations!

H. How to use your authority to change a community:

1. Take the time to discern each community to which you already belong.
2. Assess its relationship with the Kingdom of God and Heaven's values.
3. Pray for your community to turn to God, whether it be your ethnicity or race, your culture, members of your profession, neighborhood, recreational group, or members of a team.
4. Learn to be a gate keeper. Don't allow the enemy to come in. If he is already inside, use your authority to throw him out!