

NSLF CONNECT

SESSION 7: The Role of Authority in Leadership

MAIN THEME OF THIS SESSION:

**That all good leaders need to understand the importance of authority and how it works.
In order for leaders to use authority well, they must submit to / be under it!**

Authority is a pretty emotionally laden word.

We're suspicious of it and inclined to limit it

But most leadership problems come from leaders failing to use the authority they've been given

Perhaps for fear of failure or out of a desire to appear egalitarian

To be a good leader you have to figure out how to use authority well!

What is authority? It's a *particular kind of power*

Legitimate power that's bestowed on leaders in order to get things done

Power comes in many other forms: it comes from money, strength, intuition, information & charisma

Power is value-neutral – can be used either for good or evil

Power does though have a corrosive impact on the character of leaders

Some people say, 'everyone's a leader' because we all have power and influence of some form

But leaders are those who use a particular kind of power – they have been *authorised*

Authority is *institutional power* – the group authorises leaders to act legitimately on its behalf

Authority comes from *above* – it is bestowed

Even in democratic nations, though the leaders are elected, the authority still comes from above

To protect group power from being corrupted, authority is invested in *an office*

When appointed, the leader comes under the office

To symbolise this, he swears an oath of allegiance to the office

Authority is important because it's protective

It's protective of those who follow, those who lead, and also of the group mission

Every leader firstly needs to learn to *be under authority*

Learning to be under authority, or to be obedient, is never easy or natural for leadership types

But it teaches them 'teachability' and humility – which protect leaders from their own vanities

It wards off the corrosive influence of power

If you want to be a good leader learn to take orders – even from leaders you don't respect!

It's not easy but it teaches patience, hopefulness and endurance

It stops you from becoming a tyrant

So, push on to develop the kind of character that will make you worthy of the office!

Good leadership requires a strong office but equally important are *good officers!*

QUESTIONS:

To what degree am I comfortable with, or suspicious of, authority?

As a leader, will I be more inclined to abuse my authority or not to use it enough?

Why do I think so?