

Power. Authority. Control. Leadership. What images do these words evoke for you? When you picture someone described like this, what do you picture? He or she? Business suit, army fatigues, nurse scrubs, or a sari? Young, old, or middle aged?

American society values people with these qualities more than those without them. Just look at the richest people and jobs we produce. Just look at how many training seminars there are to make you more like this. These words are often how we describe a successful person. Until we get in a meeting with one. Then, we call them bossy, driven, aloof, or power-hungry.

But the reality is that these traits are, like all personality traits, God-given. In fact, they can reflect the Image of God in any one of us. Like the other eight reflections of God we've been talking about, this one shows us one facet of God's character, and an important one.

*"These, then, are the things you should teach.
Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you." – Titus 2:15*

God doesn't call all of us to be leaders, whatever events like the Global Leadership Summit might say. My mom was a prime example of a woman who did not have leadership gifts yet had incredible influence for the kingdom of God in the lives of others. God uses whatever parts of His character he has put inside us for His glory, and that includes a tendency toward power and control. The Apostle Paul calls this trait out of both Titus above and Timothy below.

*"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid,
but gives us power, love and self-discipline." – 2 Tim. 1:7*

It is God who is the ultimate authority, power, and control in this world, but that reflects through some into this world to reveal God to those who don't yet know Him. These people are the defenders of the weak, the head of the organization, and the challenger of sin. But when the world distorts this, they can become the bullies, the manipulators, and the "bulls in a china shop".

When I think of this authoritative character trait, I think of John the Baptist. From his first introduction where he challenges the crowd around him – "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" – to his political stand against Herod for divorcing his wife and taking his sister-in-law Herodias as a lover – "Now Herod had arrested John...for John had been saying to him: 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'" – John used his authority and power to stand against sinfulness and bring the message of the Kingdom of God. As it usually does, it brought him persecution, but to reflect God's character given to you is worth even that.

This is one of the more divisive traits we've talked about. Yet like all 9 of these traits, every one of us reflects this at least a little. So, let's take a moment and ponder this. Where do you see this trait appearing in your own life? At work? At home? At church? At school? How might God be calling you to use this aspect of His character to further His mission?