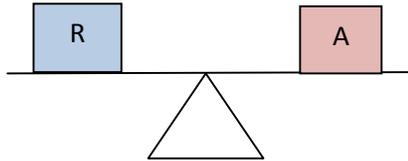


Balancing Authority and Responsibility

If you are going to do a job (any job) you need to have Authority commensurate with the Responsibility you have been given, in order to accomplish the job.

Imagine it like a board balanced in its middle (like a see-saw), with two boxes on either side.

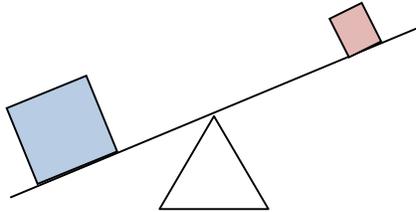


As long as Responsibility and Authority are basically balanced, things usually go along well. People are happy in their jobs, and the job (in this case teaching others) gets done.

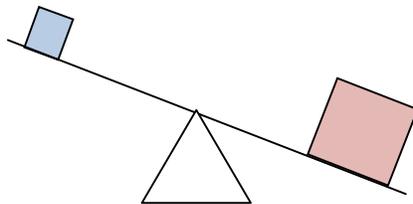
However, if Responsibility and Authority become unbalanced, then problems usually appear. People become unhappy in their jobs, and the job (teaching) begins to suffer.

Generally there are two extremes that should be guarded against.

If you have lots of Responsibility and no Authority; then you are a “Slave.”



If you have lots of Authority and no Responsibility; then you are a “Dictator.”



(Not that you would actually become a slave or a dictator; but you get the general idea. ☺)

It is best to keep things balanced. In the case of teaching, if a teacher is asked to be in charge of a classroom, that teacher should be allowed to make some of the decisions regarding the class.

Examples of Balancing Authority and Responsibility

Let's look at two examples of balancing Responsibility and Authority. Read the example and its question and then talk about it together. Finally read the discussion answer. (*Your answers may not be the same as the discussion answer! That's just fine! The idea is to understand that authority and responsibility need to be balanced, so that you can more easily do your job!*)

Example #1- You are a Teacher. You have a curriculum. The kids in your classroom did not fully understand last week's lesson. You want to review that lesson again this week, before starting another lesson.

Question: Should you have the Authority to make this decision? Why or why not?

Answer: *Yes, you should have the Authority to make this routine decision in your own classroom. You know your students best, and you know what they do and do not understand. You have a Responsibility to help your students learn and understand the truths of God's Word. You ALSO have a Responsibility to get through the curriculum in a timely fashion. You may want to check with your Supervisor about it, but the Supervisor would be well-advised to allow you to decide what to do.*

Example #2 – You are a Supervisor. And a Teacher keeps falling behind in the curriculum.

Question: You have both Authority and Responsibilities. What are these and what are you going to do about them?

Answer: *You are Responsible, to the Pastor/ Elder Board, to make sure that the curriculum is covered in a timely fashion. You should have the Authority to talk to the teacher and encourage him/her to move faster. However, in your position of Authority, you are ALSO Responsible to the Teacher! Ask some questions: Does the teacher need support? Is there a problem in the classroom? Or does the teacher simply feel that his/her class needs more time with the lessons.*

After talking with the teacher, perhaps you will also need to talk with the persons in authority over you. What needs to happen next? Does the teacher need help? Do you need to move or replace a teacher? (Or maybe the curriculum is just too hard! Perhaps it needs to be amended or changed altogether.) Whatever the case, you must have the Authority to intervene in this situation and to help correct it.

These examples show how Responsibility and Authority work best if they are balanced.

Remember that we are all parts of the Body of Christ, and that we are to be encouraging one another, building up one another, and helping each other, as we exercise authority and are responsible to one another, in an orderly and fair fashion.