

The Laws of Authority



A Study of the Laws That Rule The World

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Introduction

In all areas of life the need for a standard of authority is recognized. Whether it be government, sports, military, construction, order fulfillment, or education, all people understand they need a standard of authority for the things they do. Even false religions have standards of authority. The Buddhists have Buddha, Muslims the Koran, Jews the Hebrew Bible (what we would call the Old Testament), and Catholicism has the Pope.

If we study the world and our everyday lives carefully, we see that there is a standard of authority in every single part of our lives and the world. Though for each part of life the standards may be different, the concepts that determined those standards are the same... *every single time!!*

These concepts that determine the standards of authority in our lives are so automatic and exact that we can easily call them *The Laws of Authority*. Because these laws are used to determine standards of authority, the only way to get around or break a standard of authority is to break *The Laws of Authority* themselves.

Though all people live by *The Laws of Authority* everyday, few realize or understand how they work in their lives. In fact *The Laws of Authority* are so important to us that these laws in fact rule the world.

For a Christian the standard of authority that determines how we worship God is the New Testament of the Holy Bible. For a Christian to appeal to any other standard of authority as the basis for his or her religious practices is in violation of the laws which they claim to follow (**Mt. 28:18-20, Ga. 1:6-10**).

Even though few will recognize and accept the New Testament as their standard for authority (**Mt. 7:13-14**), it is in fact the only standard that we will be judged by at the Judgment (**Jn. 12:47-50**).

In this study we will learn:

All *The Laws of Authority*

How all people already understand, apply and obey *The Laws of Authority*

How *The Laws of Authority* are to be applied to The Holy Bible as the standard of authority for the worship of The Almighty God.

Law 1: The Chain of Command

When determining a standard of authority, the first thing that must be established is *The Chain of Command*, also known as the *Line of Command*. This first *Law of Authority* is the foundation the rest of *The Laws of Authority* are built upon.

Every organization in existence is organized and operates by a *Chain of Command*. Whether military, government, business, non-profit organizations and religions.

Define "*Chain of Command*"

Exercise 1

Using your own definition, use the remaining space on this page to make a diagram of the "Chain of Command" where you are employed. If you are currently unemployed use a former employer, government or the military.

Knowing The Chain of Command

There is a saying I learned many years ago.. *"Everybody works for somebody"*. Many who are entrepreneurs turn to self-employment for the attraction of working for oneself. Setting their own schedule, taking all the profits for themselves and many other reasons. Quickly though they all find out that they still work for other people... their customers, just to name one. If their customer has to have something when the entrepreneur has *"scheduled time off"* the customer must be satisfied or the entrepreneur risks losing that customer.

In every organization, public or private, a clearly defined *Chain of Command* is key. If you don't know who has authority over you, or who you have authority over, there is often chaos (or unemployment).

Illustration 1: A man walked into a bank and went to the first available teller. The man gave a *Direct Command* for the teller to empty her drawer and give him all the money. The teller refused the *Direct Command*, called the police and the man spent the night in jail as a suspected thief.

Illustration 2: The owner of a bank walks up to one of his tellers. The

owner of the bank gave the teller a *Direct Command* for the teller to empty her drawer and give him all the money. She obeyed the *Direct Command*.

Why did the man in Illustration 1, who gave a Direct Command, spend the night in jail while the owner of the bank, who gave the exact same command, have his command obeyed?

Spoken and Written Authority

Most secular organizations have their *Chain of Command* written in some sort of official document. When forming a corporation many state governments require this as a requirement for a business license. This puts in writing the authority given to each level of command. When your supervisor gives you a *Direct Command* you know he has authority to issue that command because of the written and established *Chain of Command*.

The *Chain of Command* is not the only part of an organization's authority structure that is written down. Each organization has its own rules that it follows for various

situations. In *Illustration 2* from the last section, even the owner of the bank can't just walk up to a teller and order them to empty their drawer. Even the owner of a bank must follow some sort of a procedure in order to be given any amount of cash from a teller drawer, if there is even authority for this.

The written "law" of an organization or government typically does not give any commands to those who are to obey its authority. The written word which defines *The Chain of Command* of an organization usually defines the roles and limits of authority of those in the organization.

Example: The United States Constitution defines a role of the President as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. The Constitution give him authority to deploy and command the military in combative situations even when the USA is not at war. Yet the President does not have the authority to declare war on another government.

Some of the greatest turmoil in any organization is when someone in *The Chain of Command* "goes beyond their authority" in either giving commands to others or in his/her own actions. Typically this

happens in ignorance but purposeful disregard of *The Chain of Command* does happen.

Exercise 2:

Think of an example you personally know of at work, school, government, out to eat, vacation, etc., where someone went beyond their authority to either give a command or to act, and it caused some degree of turmoil.

We do not have the luxury of God, Jesus or the Apostles being available to us in the flesh giving us their commands. We must rely on what we have, that being the written word

The Bible contains the written law of The Church and The Christian. Since there is no spoken authority for The Church how we interpret the written word is of most importance

Read **2 Peter 1:19-20; 3:14-16.**
What is the implication(s) of these two passages?

Scholars and theologians throughout the centuries have determined various lists of rules of how to interpret the Scriptures accurately.

Assignment

Read the articles handed out to you. Prepare to discuss in class: Do you agree or disagree with any of these rules of interpretation?

The Chain of Command of The Church

Though The Church is a divine organization, it is an organization none the less. As an organization The Church also has a "Chain of Command". What that chain is and who has what authority within the chain is primarily what has led to the confusion of the current "Christian world".

The Scriptures give a clearly defined Chain of Command for The Church. Within that chain there are varying levels of authority.

There are two distinct parts to The Church: (1) The Spiritual and (2) The Physical. The Spiritual has three or four links in the "Chain of Command" of The Church, while The Physical also has three or four links.

Exercise 3

Identify the links in "The Chain of Command" of The Church. Try also to identify the varying levels of authority throughout the chain. Be sure to give Scripture references.

Link 1: _____

Link 2: _____

Link 3: _____

Link 4: _____

Link 5: _____

Link 6: _____

Link 7: _____

Law 2: Direct Command

When a military superior gives a command to those in his authority, he expects that command to be obeyed.

This principle is true in any walk of life. Parents with their children, supervisors at work, coaches on a sports team, and especially with God.

Read **Genesis 2:8-17**. Carefully observe the details written.

1. What God did with man
2. What commands, or responsibilities, God gave
3. What restrictions God gave man
4. What consequences God gave man for disobedience

Assignment

Think of a situation in your life where the principle of "Direct Command" applies. Describe this situation and how this principle is used.

Specific and Generic Authority

Define the words:

Specific -

Generic -

When a "Direct Command" is given there is an expectation of compliance to obey the command as it was given. How many times has a parent said to their children, "I specifically told you to...."? It is the same in any "Direct Command". How many times have you had to send back a plate of food at a restaurant because what you received was not what you ordered? This is known as "Specific Authority".

Within any given command there may be some aspects of the command that allow liberty as to how the command may be fulfilled. This is known as "Generic Authority". At the restaurant you ordered an iced tea to drink. It is up to the restaurant how the tea will be made and in what kind of glass you will

receive your iced tea.

The Law of Exclusion

Inherent within the idea of "Direct Command" is another law of authority, "The Law of Exclusion". This law is so simple yet it is often ignored, especially in the area of Biblical Authority.

The "Law of Exclusion" simply states, "The statement or command to do one thing only authorizes the doing of the thing specified. The doing of all others is in effect forbidden". (J.I. Edwards)

Example: You go to your favorite restaurant and ask for grilled salmon, rice pilaf and asparagus. Twelve minutes later you receive your order but also a bowl of New England Style Clam Chowder. You tell your server that you did not order this and their reply is, "you didn't say you didn't want it".

Silence is no authority to act!!!

When these three laws are put together their effects are powerful.

Exercise 4:

Read **Matthew 28:16-20**. Identify the Specifics and Generics of the commands Jesus gave.

The Extremes of Direct Commands

There will always be some who choose to live in the extremes. They do this because it suits their own desires. A person will use statements like "The Bible doesn't say we can divide into Bible classes" or to the other extreme "the Bible doesn't say we can't use leavened bread for the Lord's Supper" because those attitudes allow them to do what they want to do without submitting to the Bible's (God's) authority.

These two attitudes are summed up this way;

"it must be specifically mentioned or it is not authorized or commanded"

"it must be specifically condemned or it is allowed"

Both of these attitudes are improper. The one seeks to bind where God has not bound and the other seeks to loose where God has not loosed! Both are equally sinful!!

Exercise 5:

Read **Matthew 19:3-9**. Explain the difference between what is commanded or authorized and what is allowed or permitted.

Law 3: Approved Example

Approved Example simply means, someone to whom some level of authority is given (*based on the Chain of Command*), has authority to give commands or approve or disapprove of practices

Example: The Drill Instructor instructs recruits in what is established practices and behavior in the Marine Corp. The D.I. also gives the recruits an example of what being a Marine is like. The recruit follows the instruction of the D.I. Why?

Illustration 3: You begin work with a new employer. One of the first people we meet is your immediate supervisor. You know he/she is your immediate supervisor because the person who hired you, introduces you to him/her. You instinctively understand that your supervisor has the authority to give you and your co-workers commands.

They explain to you your duties, what is required of you in the short and long term, how and when and where you take your breaks, how long each break will be and what is acceptable and unacceptable within this specific working environment.

You obey their commands and submit to their example because you understand they have the

authority to issue commands to you and to approve and to disapprove of the practices within your specific work environment.

New Testament Examples

As Christians we know Jesus is our Lord, Savior and King. As such He has the authority to issue commands that we must follow. Jesus not only has authority to issue commands but to set examples and to approve or disapprove of practices.

Exercise 6

Read **Philippians 2:5-8;**
Matthew 5:17-20; John 13:13-17;
Mark 10:35-45; Luke 22: 14-23.
From these passages describe the examples Jesus sets, the practices or attitudes Jesus approves and/or disapproves of.

In **John 16:5-15** Jesus tells the Apostles He is going away but that The Holy Spirit would come and guide them into all truth. Jesus knew He would not be on the earth to teach The Gospel. He had to choose people to do it for him. He chose The Apostles.

Read carefully **John 16:5-15; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 9:10-22**

1. Who gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth?
2. To whom is Jesus speaking?
3. What commands did Jesus give to these men?
4. Who does the one with all authority give authority to teach the world the will of God and the teachings of Jesus?
5. Who should the world learn from to know the will of God and the teachings of Jesus?
6. Where do we find the teachings of these chosen men?

Old Testament Examples

Christians study and speak often of the Old Testament's lack of authority in areas of Christian worship, doctrine and practices. However, the Old Testament does have binding authority in one area for the Christian and the Church.

Exercise 7

Read **1 Corinthians 10:1-12; Hebrews 11:4-40**. Explain how the OT is a source of authority for Christians.

Read **Matthew 5:17-18, 28:18-20; Galatians 3:19-25; Hebrews 8:7-13**. Explain why the OT is not authority in area of Christian worship.

Law 4: Logical Conclusion

The Law of *Logical Conclusion* is also known as *Necessary Inference* or *Forced Implication*.

A *Logical Conclusion* is reached when a study of the context, whether written or spoken, forces the reader or listener to conclusions which are not specifically stated in the context.

David E. Pratte from his article "*The Authority of Scriptural Reasoning: Indirect Teaching by Logical Conclusions or 'Necessary Inferences'*" defines this law as "*truths that are not directly or expressly stated, but must necessarily follow as a logical conclusion from what is stated*".

Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary defines Necessary Inference as "*A conclusion that is dictated by a fact or premise. If the underlying fact or premise is true, then the necessary inference is an unavoidable conclusion that must be drawn.*"

This law is used perhaps more often than the first three, yet is the the most controversial. It is the most controversial because it involves interpretation of the hearer or reader.

Define Interpretation:

In the realm of legal and criminal investigations, the investigators gather evidence; physical evidence (which may include autopsy results, handwriting analysis, DNA samples, weapons, contracts, etc.), eye witness testimony, circumstantial evidence, personal experience or intuition. The investigators must consider all of the evidence they have to come to a conclusion. In doing so they must sift out false evidence and discard its influence on the conclusion. The more evidence they have the easier it can be to interpret the evidence and reach a *Logical Conclusion* based on facts.

Example: Nancy walked into the room where her husband Ron already was, slammed the door, sat down forcefully in a chair, crossed her arms suddenly then stared at Ron with her lips pursed and eyebrows down. Based on observable facts Ron *logically concluded* she was angry with him.

When interpreting the spoken word we do the same things as investigators and Ron; gather evidence to reach a conclusion. Hopefully your angry spouse will openly tell you why they're angry,

but this does not always happen. You ask questions, use your experience and intuition to reach a conclusion of what happened to make your spouse angry.

In regular conversation we do the same things. Especially if we don't understand something that was said, we ask questions, use our experience and intuition to reach a *Logical Conclusion*.

Unlike the spoken word however, writers in our day usually make every effort to explain the context of a work so the reader doesn't need to do any research within the story itself. Many times though one writer will leave out or omit details that another writer includes and vice versa. Assuming there is no intent to mislead the two works together will give the reader a complete view of a story or situation.

What if though a writer wrote as if he/she assumed the reader would already be familiar with the background and context of his work or if the writer wasn't concerned about writing events in chronological order. The reader would have to do quite a bit more research to understand the context and interpret the meaning of the written work. This is how the books of the Bible were written, especially *The Epistles* or letters of the New

Testament.

Exercise 8

Name all of the areas you can that Biblical writers would assume their readers were already familiar with.

Intended Context

Christians study and speak often of *the context of a passage*. Many of us don't really know what it means to study something in its context.

Define Context:

By *Intended Context* we mean that not all things were intended for us to hear or read by the original speaker or writer.

When writing and speaking the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln was not addressing us 150 years later, he wasn't even concerned with ten years later, but to those who heard him on Thursday, November 19, 1863 at the height of The Civil War. Because he was addressing the people of that day in those circumstances our understanding of

that speech must be in Lincoln's context and not our own. Once we understand that context then we can see how that speech may apply to us 150 years later.

Exercise 9

Read the book of Philemon: What is the Intended Context? In other words; What is the format of this writing?

Who is the author and what do we know about him?

Who is the intended audience of this writing and what do we know about them?

What is the purpose of this writing?

What lesson or lessons was the author trying to convey to the intended audience?

What lessons can be applied to our lives today?

Law 5: The Law of Exclusion

The Law of *Exclusion* is another one of those laws that rule our every day life, that everyone instinctively knows and uses and teaches, until they begin to study the Scriptures.

Where the first four *Laws of Authority* can stand mostly on their own, *The Law of Exclusion* is reliant upon the first four laws. Yet the first four laws also need *The Law of Exclusion* for them to be effective. You may recall that we briefly studied this *Law of Authority* when we studied *The Law of Direct Command*.

Illustration 5: A Master Carpenter gives his apprentice a *Direct Command* to build a cabinet to the specifications on the plans he is shown. The Master Carpenter then shows his apprentice a cabinet he has built according to the exact same plans. The Master Carpenter then gives the apprentice a deadline of four days to complete the cabinet.

This is a fairly common example when someone is learning how to do something from someone else. The teacher tells the student to do something, gives a "blueprint" of what the final product should look like and how it should work,

gives the student an example of how to do it, gives a deadline of when the job is to be completed.

All of the first four *Laws of Authority* are present within this example, as well as the *Law of Exclusion*. All of the principles that guide us in applying the *Laws of Authority* are present within this example, as well as the *Law of Exclusion*.

Assignment: Go back over each lesson looking for the *illustrations* and *Examples*. Highlight or circle each time *The Law of Exclusion* appears or would apply.

Read **Genesis 6:13-16**. Identify...

1. *The Chain of Command*
2. *Direct Commands* given. Note if the commands are generic or specific
3. *Any Approved Examples* within the context

4. Any conclusions the context forces you to reach.

5. Anything within the context that would be excluded based upon the previous findings

Law 6: The Law of Consistent Application

What do you suppose would have happened if Noah neglected to cover the inside starboard side of the ark with pitch? Would the ark have been as water-tight on that side of the ship? Of course not! Noah would be inconsistent with his application of the pitch.

When building your home, what if the crew framing the house used the metric system on the front side of the home and used the American standard system on the rest of the home? Would the house be as stable and proportioned? Of course not! The walls and ceilings in the front would be different heights and lengths and depths as the rest of the house.

The Law of Consistent Application demands that when a standard of authority is decided upon, that standard must be applied to every person and in all circumstances within the areas the standard applies, except where the standard states otherwise.

God said to "cover [the ark] inside and outside with pitch.". If Noah failed to do this on any part of the ark, the ark would not be seaworthy and he would have been forgetful of God's law at best and rebellious at worst. Either way his application of the commands would be

inconsistent and we would not look upon Noah as a faithful man of God.

Example: Elizabeth went to the grocery store for a five pound bag of bread flour, 1 gallon of milk and one pound of butter. The price labeled for the bread flour was \$2.45, the milk was labeled \$3.99 and the butter \$1.99. When she was checking out though the bread flour rang up \$5.22, the milk \$2.05 and the butter \$9.99. Elizabeth asked why the differences and was told by the cashier "*We change the prices every twenty to thirty minutes. We think it's more fun for the customer to have to guess what things cost.*"

Would any shopper in their right mind think it fun for things to be so chaotic? Even in the cultures that haggle prices regularly shoppers would not be satisfied with this system.

Consistent Application of rules and laws and standards of authority is what brings order out of chaos.

Read **Matthew 28:18-20**. Jesus gave The Apostles and us four direct commands. What are they?

In giving these commands to The Apostles and us, Jesus never gave them a "but" or an "unless". Jesus expected the Apostles to obey Him and he expects us to obey the commands. Just as The Apostles were to be consistent in their application and obedience to these commands so are we. Does Jesus say to go everyday or when we go how far we are to go? No. But He did say *to go* which excludes waiting. At some point every Christian is to go some distance.

When we go we are to make disciples of Jesus. Then we are to baptize those new disciples. How many of them? All of them. Then they are to be taught all things Jesus taught The Apostles.

Inconsistencies Allowed by God

Where God has specified we are not allowed to generalize. Where God has generalized we are not allowed to specify. Where God binds we are not allowed to loose. Where God looses we are not allowed to bind. However, under certain circumstances God does allow some of his authority to be applied inconsistently.

To be clear, not that God permits rebellion or for us to choose disobedience. God allows inconsistent application

(exceptions) in areas of His authority **ONLY** in the specific circumstances God Himself defines and dictates.

Before we study these exceptions we need to define a few terms.

Define "consistent":

Define "command":

Define "allow"

*Read **Matthew 19:3-9**. Name the exception Jesus allows in this passage and the circumstances He allows it.*

Exercise 10

Name some other areas in the Law of Christ where there are exceptions and the circumstances in which those exceptions are allowed?

Law 7: The Law of Expediency

Surprisingly, the most abused *Law of Authority* is *The Law of Expediency*. All Christians know that we (the church) are to evangelize, help the needy, be hospitable, etc. The great divide between the denominations and the denominationally minded is HOW we (the church or their church) are to go about obeying these commands. Not necessarily who is to do the work but with what tools and with what organization.

The divisions in the church since 1900 were almost always over tools Christians used in worship or in obeying other commands like evangelism, worship, benevolence and edification. These issues were not just about expedients. They included the use of the treasury, the organization of the church and others, but at the heart of these debates was expediency.

Define expedient

Exercise 11

Think of your current job or hobby. Name some expedients you use in your job or hobby.

Every organization in the world uses expedients to accomplish their purposes. Many even have internal or external rules or laws which specify or exclude certain expedients for one reason or another.

Some times what most would call "*common sense*" determines what a proper or improper expedient would be.

Illustration 6: A carpenter needs to hammer in 5 heavy gauge nails to hold up a support beam. He asked his helper for a phillips head screwdriver.

This is another one of those *Laws of Authority* that all people recognize and use daily in their lives but as soon as they open the Bible this rule does not apply. Why?

Aids

In whatever the area, an expedient is to only be an aid to carry out a command or other work.

Example: Your boss tells you he wants you to write a report about your department's expenses from the last six months. You choose to write the report using a spreadsheet program on your computer.

You could have used a word processor or typewriter to write the same report but you chose a computer program. Either way you would have fulfilled your boss' command.

Additions

What if you chose to organize a small group of people, from within your department, to write this report for you? You are no longer using an aid but have added to the command given to you. Some may say, "what does it matter as long as it gets done and is accurate?" The answer is that your boss asked you to write the report!! Remember Tom Sawyer painting the fence?

Lawful and Unlawful Expedients

In the example above, the small group you organized was not only an addition but unlawful. The

people in your department were not hired nor given the responsibility to write departmental reports. They were hired and assigned to do their job within your department. You were hired and given the responsibility to write departmental reports, which is why your boss asked you to write it. By adding an organization to your company not authorized by *The Chain of Command* you have made yourself disobedient to your boss and employer.

The computer was lawful because it only aided you in carrying out your responsibility. It did not take your place in the writing of the report.

The Law of Expediency demands first that any expedient, or aid be lawful. In other words, the expedient must not by-pass *The Chain of Command*, violate any other *Direct commands*, contradict accepted *Approved Examples* or any of the principles identified with these or the other *Laws of Authority*.

Beyond this, *The Law of Expediency* demands that the expedient actually be helpful. A screwdriver, though a lawful expedient to a carpenter, is not very helpful in hammering in heavy gauge nails. The very definition of the term "expedient" requires helpfulness.

Exercise 12

Read **Matthew 28:16-20**. In this one passage we find all of the Laws of Authority and all of the principles regarding them. Study this passage and identify:

The Chain of Command:

All Direct Commands:

Any Specific and Generic Authority:

Approved Examples:

Any Logical Conclusions in the context:

The Intended Context and application:

The Law of Exclusion:

Consistent Application:

Expedients:

Questions of Authority of The Church

Up until now we have studied the Laws of Authority as concepts found in all walks of life. Lord willing you have seen how these Laws apply not only in the examples brought out in this booklet and in our discussions, but also in your own life and The Church.

At this point I want to challenge you and our group discussions to learn how *The Laws of Authority* apply in specific doctrines, practices, culture and traditions of The Church and especially this local congregation. These discussions are not intended to disrupt, change, add, or subtract any doctrines, practices, culture and traditions, unless in our study we find that we are practicing or teaching error or are lacking in some area.

I am aware that every Christian has questions about any number of things. Why this is done, or that is taught, or why isn't this done this way and so on. Therefore I ask that you, the class participant, bring topics to me for study in our class.

How many in the class offer suggestions will determine if and when we get to yours. The earlier you suggest your topic, the more likely we will get to it.

Here are some suggestions to stimulate **your** ideas

1. how many faithful children must an elder have
2. women speaking in the assemblies
3. use of the treasury for: charity for non-Christians, social activities, advertising, the building, etc.
4. Bible classes and women teachers
5. The Lord's Supper on Sunday night

Do not assume others will offer suggestions or the topic you'd like to study. If few or no suggestions are offered I will have to decide which topics we will study. Blank pages have been added for your convenience in taking notes and contributing to the discussions and study.

I will let the class know which topic(s) we will be studying the following week so that you may study ahead. May The Lord bless us as we study these topics and learn how to apply *The Laws of Authority* in our worship to Him.

Notes for Personal Study

Jeremiah 10:23

I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

Proverbs 30:5-6

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

2 Peter 1:19-21

So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

John 17:20-23

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me