

Title: Generic and Specific Authority Part #1

Issues of generic and specific authority are matters that are essential to our understanding of the word of God. Can you state the difference between generic authority and specific authority? Whether you can express it in words or not, I am sure you recognize the difference. The difference is so simple a child can understand it! We believe the Scriptures are inspired of God and they are our sole authority in matters of faith and practice, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. We understand the manner in which Scripture authorizes: direct statement, example, and implication. The study before us will explore the two kinds of authority: generic authority and specific authority. How do these two kinds of authority differ?

1. We must be careful not to confuse the two **kinds** of authority with the **three** ways to establish authority. The three ways to establish authority are **direct statement**, **example**, and **implication**. The nature of each of these three means of authority is either generic or specific.
2. What is **Generic Authority**? This is where something is authorized by command, example, or implication, but the means, method, or persons, etc. for carrying it out have not **been specified**. (General authority can also be called 'general authority.")
 - a. This is easily illustrated by the use of "Go" in Matthew 28:19. Jesus commanded His disciples to go, but did not specify a means for going. It was a matter of choice how they might go. They were at liberty to choose any lawful means of going.
 - b. This can be further illustrated by "baptizing" in Matthew 28:19. Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize, but did not specify where. A lake, a river, the ocean – all would be acceptable. This was a general command with respect to where.
 - c. God's manner of authorizing is self-evident by the very nature of the Scriptures themselves.
3. What is **Specific Authority**? This is where something is authorized by command, example, or implication, and the **means, method, or persons**, etc. for carrying it out have been specified. (Specific authority can also be called "special authority.")
 - a. This is easily illustrated by the command to preach the gospel in Mark 16:15. The gospel is a specific message. God gave us no choice as to what to teach. (We can't teach mathematics, the Koran, art, auto mechanics, etc.).
 - b. Specific authority excludes any means, methods, or substance of the same order or class as the thing authorized. When Jesus authorized us to teach the gospel, we can't teach another message.

- Benjamin Lee