

Title: Generic and Specific Authority Part #2

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'.")
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".")

Generic and specific authority do not involve some special way of thinking that applies only to Bible study.

This is ordinary thinking that we use every day in all areas of life. Some examples:

1. "Would one of the young men come and help me with an illustration?" Which young man am I referring to? Since the language is general, any will do! "Would John come and help me?" Now the language is specific; any young man will not do, only the one specified!"
2. "Hand me a book, please." Which book? The statement is general; any will do. "Hand me the red book. Now the language is specific; I have specified which book. Only the red book will do.
3. This principle is so basic to our manner of communication, that in all areas of life we are dependent upon recognizing the difference between general and specific language. A child that can differentiate between colors knows generic and specific authority.

Generic and specific elements are found in all means of authority. When something is authorized, a part of that thing will always be specific while another part may be general. All means of authority have both generic and specific elements. A case for illustration:

1. "Hand me a book, please." This statement is specific as to the kind of object. This statement rules out the pencil. But it is also generic as to which book. Any book, green, blue or red will do.
2. The command regarding the book is both generic and specific, depending on which element is being considered.

Biblical authority is of the same nature. In each of the illustrations below describe what elements are specific and which are generic.

1. Genesis 6:14. "gopher wood." In what way is the command specific and generic?
2. Exodus 12:5, "lamb, a male of the first year." In what way is the command specific and generic?

3. Colossians 3:16, "singing." In what way is the command specific and generic?

- Benjamin Lee