

Authority
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Matthew 7:15-29

Opening: Authority is a word we use in several ways. When there is a crime or a public safety issue we often say we should “call the authorities;” people authorized to do something about what happened. When we need knowledge or advice we might turn to a celebrated authority on the subject whose knowledge gives them influence in that area. Sidebar: Today, anyone with a YouTube account can declare themselves an authority (an “influencer”) even if all they have is an opinion. [Inside joke, “They say...”] To be fair, not all influencers are bad – just be careful who you trust when it counts.

The core definition of authority is “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, or control people or resources.”ⁱ Let’s get practical. Who is the authority figure in your life? You might say, “*This is America; I am my own authority figure!*” Technically, true, but if I followed you around all day and watched your life how would I determine who functions as the authority figures in your life?

The Point: Salvation in Christ not only means accepting the righteousness Jesus gives as our Savior (justification); it means turning our lives over to Him as Lord. I don’t GIVE Him the authority to “call the shots” in my life. It means I recognize and gladly surrender to the authority He already HAS as the Son of God (obedience and sanctification).

[My quandary: The shortest lesson time; two weeks missed; You can’t SKIP the “Sermon on the Mount!” My solution: A summary; homework; an application to our lives.]

In Matthew 5 Jesus began this sermon on a hillside with the “Beatitudes.” This is a series of declarations of blessedness (“blessed are the poor in spirit...” etc.) “describing the ideal disciple and his/her rewards, both present and future.”ⁱⁱ Then through chapters 6 & 7 Jesus continued His sermon covering a myriad of lessons about the character, conduct, and inner motives of those who follow Him. The teaching goes beyond external religious observance to matters of the heart. Here is the summary I promised:

- Salt and Light (5:13–16): Disciples are called to influence the world through their character and good works that glorify God.
- True Righteousness (5:17–48): Jesus contrasts external law-keeping with inner transformation, teaching on anger, lust, retaliation, and love for enemies.
- Practicing Devotion (6:1–18): Instructions on giving, praying (including the Lord’s Prayer), and fasting — emphasizing sincerity over public display.
- Treasures and Trust (6:19–34): Store treasures in heaven, serve God rather than wealth, and trust the Father’s provision.
- Judgment and Discernment (7:1–12): Warnings against hypocrisy, encouragement to pray persistently, and the “Golden Rule” for living with others.

- The Way of Wisdom (7:13–23): Jesus closes with vivid contrasts — narrow vs. wide gates, true vs. false prophets.
- I want to focus our application on Jesus’ familiar parable (illustration) in 7:24-27:

Matthew 7:24–29 (ESV) — 24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **26** And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

- The example explains itself. Without a solid foundation the house will collapse when storms come; and they WILL come. [Illustration: Foundations at our house]
- The “house” is my life here on earth.
- Look at verse 24. How does Jesus say we can build our house “on the rock?”
- In verse 26 He contrasts the wise builder with the foolish builder.
- Sand represents a life built on feelings, convenience, culture, or self—anything unstable that shifts when pressure comes.
- So, how CAN I build my life on the rock and not the sand?

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, **29** for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

- The people didn’t declare Jesus as an authority. They RECOGNIZED His authority. By contrast, in **Matthew 21:23** the religious leaders asked Jesus, “*By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?*”
- The common folk on the hillside got it! The religious elite were afraid of it.
- Jesus was not just a “noted authority” with a great education.
- The source of His authority is His position and divinity as the Son of God.
- Before He ascended to Heaven Jesus declared: “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*” (Matthew 28:18) (See John 5:26–27 also).
- Consider the first part of the word AUTHORITY – AUTHOR, creator.
- Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV) describes Jesus as, “*the author and finisher of our faith...*”
- Colossians 1:15–16, “*...by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth...*”
- Who better to “call the shots” in my life than the one who created my life and everything else in the universe?
- There is a problem though. Jesus said whoever “hears and does” what He teaches has built on the rock. I know myself well enough (and Romans 3:23 confirms) I will never pass “building inspection!” That’s true but there is hope.
- It’s easy to build in the sand. You can do that with a little kid’s shovel and pail.
- Go to the top of Stone Mountain to dig a foundation for your house it’s another story. You would need dynamite and giant equipment backed by a lot of POWER.

- The good news: The Latin root word for AUTHORITY (*augere*) means “to cause to grow, to bring into being.” True authority isn’t just permission to “call the shots” but the POWER to carry out those orders! He is both “author” AND “finisher.”
- **2 Peter 1:3 (ESV)** says, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...” (Emphasis mine)
- We climb up that rock, show Jesus our shovel and pail, and ask Him to bring in the BIG EQUIPMENT to build our house on it. We TRUST that He WILL DO IT!

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Is Jesus the AUTHORITY in my life? Is my house built on Him as the ROCK?
- How can we do a building “inspection” of the soundness of our life’s foundation?
- This is where your homework assignment comes into play.
- On your own read Matthew 5-7 to absorb it in your own heart and mind.
- Another great passage is Galatians 5:22-23 (the Fruit of the Spirit).
- The question is not if we are accomplishing 100% of Jesus’ teaching; no one will.
- So, how can I pass inspection on the foundation of my “spiritual house?”
- Climb up on that rock each day and ask Jesus for the POWER to build on it. The power to LIVE the way He has commanded us to live as His disciple.
- Passing inspection isn’t about perfection—it’s about submission, dependence, and daily obedience empowered by Christ as the AUTHORITY in a disciple’s life!

ⁱ <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/authority>

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<https://www.gotquestions.org/beatitudes.html#:~:text=Answer,%5D%20of%20.%20.%20.%20.%E2%80%9D>