

“Authority”

By: Jack Muellerleile

“Authority” defined: **1.** the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues; the right to control, command, or determine. **2.** a power or right delegated or given; authorization. **3.** a person or body of persons in whom authority is vested, as a governmental agency. **4. authorities.** persons having the legal power to make and enforce the law; government. **5.** an accepted source of information, advice, or substantiation. **6.** a quotation or citation from such a source. **7.** an expert on a subject: *an authority on baseball*. **8.** persuasive force; conviction: *to speak with authority*. **9.** a statute, court rule, or judicial decision that establishes a rule or principle of law; ruling. **10.** the right to respect or acceptance of one’s word, command, thought, etc.; commanding influence. **11.** a warrant for action; justification. **12.** testimony; witness. – **Syn.** AUTHORITY, CONTROL, INFLUENCE denote a power or right to direct the actions or thoughts of others. AUTHORITY is a power or right, usu. Because of rank or office, to issue commands and to punish for violations: *to have authority over subordinates*. CONTROL is either power or influence applied to the complete and successful direction or manipulation of persons or things: *to be in control of a project*. INFLUENCE is a personal and unofficial power derived from deference of others to one’s character, ability, or station; it may be exerted unconsciously or may operate through persuasion: *to have influence over one’s friends*.

Whew!! Doesn’t “Authority” have lots of definitions? They take up 22 lines of space in the Random House Webster’s College Dictionary. Do you wonder why? I’d guess it’s because “authority” affects just about everyone and everything almost all the time when one occupies a seat in civilized society.

For most, “Authority” is viewed simply. They believe that all authority emanates from God; is granted to humans (along with free will); and is passed along to others (representative government, law enforcement, military, employers, church leaders, spouses, etc.) in the self-interest of those first recipients. Exceptions to this ‘natural distribution’ of authority exist when one earns sufficient respect from others as to become ‘an authority’ on some subject or within some frame of reference such as ‘parenting’.

Recognition of and respect for authority are key in the development of young people preparing to enter the workaday world and compete with others for their ‘daily bread’. Our prisons are full of folks who chose not to recognize or respect authority. Just about everyone else got the message from their parents or others who were able to exert influence upon them during their formative years.

Inability or unwillingness to respect authority will most likely result in your becoming an outcast at best, a member of the graveyard or prison population at worst.

