

Who Has Authority? Lesson Plan on Authority

In today's catechetical lesson, we will delve into the profound concept of authority, a term that resonates deeply within both our daily lives and our spiritual journey. Our exploration begins by unraveling the multifaceted meaning of 'authority' - is it simply a matter of power and influence, or is there more to it?

In this lesson plan on authority, we'll discuss how authority manifests in various forms, from the expertise of a knowledgeable individual to the commanding presence that inspires obedience. This discussion will lead us to contemplate the figures in our own lives who embody this trait, prompting us to reflect on those we regard as authorities due to their wisdom, confidence, or ability to influence our decisions and beliefs.

Central to this lesson plan on authority is the Gospel reading from Mark 1:21-28, where we witness the unparalleled authority of Jesus Christ. His teachings, imbued with profound knowledge, and His actions, marked by unwavering confidence, exemplify true spiritual authority. This exploration will challenge us to consider the source of Jesus' authority and our personal willingness to recognize Him as a paramount influence in our lives.

Furthermore, we will examine the concept of delegated authority through examples from everyday life and the Church. The Church's teaching authority, the Magisterium, is a pivotal focus, inviting us to reflect on our relationship with Church teachings, even when they challenge or conflict with contemporary societal norms. This session aims not only to deepen our understanding of authority but also to encourage us to seek greater clarity and wisdom through prayer, study, and open-hearted dialogue with the Church and its teachings.

Opening Activity for the Lesson Plan on Authority

The [Authority in Action Role-Play Challenge](#) serves as an engaging and dynamic opening activity for our lesson on understanding and exercising authority in various contexts, paralleling the way authority is manifested in the Catholic Church and in the teachings of Jesus.

Participants are assigned roles in diverse scenarios, from a teacher managing classroom dynamics to a doctor making critical healthcare decisions. This hands-on approach enables participants to experience the weight and impact of authority, fostering empathy and insight into the responsibilities that accompany leadership roles.

Choose an appropriate number of scenarios for the size of your group and the time available.

[The full instructions and example scenarios can be found here.](#)

Follow up with a few questions

1. In what ways did the scenarios reveal the challenges and responsibilities of authority? How does this relate to the responsibilities of Church leaders?

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2. When you were in a position of authority during the role-play, how did it affect your decision-making? Does this give you a new perspective on how Church authorities make decisions?
3. What do you think the word "authority" means?

Authority can be a characteristic. One definition of authority is

The power to influence others, especially because of one's commanding manner or one's recognized knowledge about something.

"he has the natural authority of one who is used to being obeyed"

Authority can also describe a person:

A person with extensive or specialized knowledge about a subject; an expert.

"she was an authority on the stock market"

So an authority is someone who leads with confidence and knowledge. An authority also has the power to influence those around him or her.

- Who are some people you would consider as authorities based on their knowledge?
- Who are some people who have authority due to their commanding manner or confidence?
- Who has the power to influence you?

These are the people who are authorities in your life.

Scripture Reading for Lesson Plan on Authority

Read [Mark 1:21-28](#)

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!"

Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him."

His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

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Discussion for this Lesson Plan on Authority

The people are amazed by the authority of Jesus. He teaches with knowledge and he acts with confidence, even being able to command an unclean spirit to leave.

- What specifically does Jesus do in this gospel that shows authority?
- Where does the authority of Jesus come from?
- How willing are you to see Jesus as an authority?
- Do you give Jesus the same sort of authority to influence you as you give to friends and celebrities? Why or why not?

Jesus' authority comes from his relationship with the Father. He spends time in prayer. He studies and understands scripture. He trusts that the Father will do what is necessary to carry out his will. These are all good things for us to do also.

Another definition of authority shows that it can be passed from one person to another:

The right to act in a specified way, delegated from one person or organization to another.

Police have the authority to arrest criminals.

So an authority, like the government, can give others, like the police, authority to carry out tasks. Your school gives your teachers the authority to teach you. Through licensing states give doctors the authority to practice medicine. In the same way, Jesus has given the Church authority to teach, confer the sacraments, and pass on the faith. This has been delegated for two thousand years, starting with the apostles.

The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me

Luke 10:16

We call this authority of the Church to teach us The Magisterium.

Sometimes it is difficult to accept Church authority. We might disagree with something the Church teaches. Or we might find it inconvenient. But we must remember that the Church has thousands of years of knowledge. And we depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So we cannot just lightly reject Church teachings just because we don't like them.

- Are there any Church teachings you find difficult to accept?
- What might you do to better understand these teachings? (talk to a priest, read [YOUCAT](#) or the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#))
- Why do you think it is easier to accept our friends, social media, and pop culture as authority that we accept the Church authority?

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Reflection Questions for this Lesson Plan on What Needs to Be Left Behind

Following the large group discussion, small group reflection questions can deepen the participants' understanding and personal connection to the topic of authority, particularly in the context of Jesus' authority and that of the Church. These questions can facilitate intimate and thoughtful conversations within smaller groups:

- Reflecting on the Gospel of Mark, in what ways did Jesus demonstrate His authority differently than worldly leaders do? How does this contrast with today's common perceptions of authority?
- Discuss instances in your life where you have witnessed authority being exercised in a manner similar to Jesus. How did these instances impact your view of authority?
- How does Jesus' relationship with the Father, as seen through His life of prayer and understanding of Scripture, influence your perception of what true authority should be based on?
- In what ways can we, as followers of Christ, model our exercise of authority on Jesus' example, both in personal and community settings?
- Discuss the challenges of accepting the Church's authority, especially when it conflicts with popular opinion or personal beliefs. How can we reconcile these challenges with our faith?
- How does the concept of delegated authority, as seen in the Church through the Magisterium, parallel other forms of authority in society? Discuss the benefits and responsibilities of this delegation.
- Reflect on a time when you struggled with a teaching of the Church. How did you resolve this struggle, or how are you currently addressing it?
- Consider why societal influences like friends or media may sometimes seem more authoritative than the Church. What factors contribute to this perception, and how can we discern true authority?
- Discuss practical steps you can take to strengthen your understanding and acceptance of the Church's teachings. How can this lead to a deeper relationship with Christ?

These questions are designed to foster a deeper understanding of the nature of Jesus' authority and how it is reflected in the Church, encouraging participants to apply these insights to their own lives and spiritual journeys.

Challenge for this Lesson Plan on Authority

This week, I encourage you to embark on a personal journey of exploration and understanding regarding a specific teaching of the Catholic Church. Begin by selecting a topic or doctrine that intrigues you, confuses you, or perhaps one you find challenging. This could range from understanding the nature of the Holy Trinity, to the significance of the Sacraments, or the Church's stance on social issues.

Once you have chosen your topic, dedicate time to research and reflect on it. Start by consulting reliable sources like the Catechism of the Catholic Church, YOUCAT (Youth Catechism), or other official Church documents. These texts offer a wealth of information and can provide a clear, authoritative perspective on Church teachings.

Consider also engaging with other materials such as books, articles, or videos from respected Catholic theologians and scholars. This can provide you with a broader and more nuanced understanding of the topic.

Additionally, it can be incredibly beneficial to discuss your chosen topic with someone knowledgeable in the faith, such as a priest, catechist, or a well-informed member of your parish. Engaging in conversation can offer new insights, answer questions, and clarify doubts.

Integral to this process is prayer. Spend time in prayer, specifically asking the Holy Spirit for the gift of understanding. This spiritual approach is crucial as it opens your heart and mind to deeper insights and helps you to grasp the spiritual and theological depth of the Church's teachings.

As you embark on this week of exploration, remember that understanding the Church's teachings is a journey that involves both the mind and the heart. Be open to where this journey might lead you, and how it might deepen your relationship with God and His Church.

Prayer for this Lesson Plan on Authority

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of this day and for the opportunity to explore the profound concept of authority. We are grateful for the wisdom and teachings of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who showed us the true essence of authority through His life and ministry.

Lord, as we reflect on the lessons learned today, we ask for Your guidance in recognizing and respecting the various forms of authority in our lives, especially the authority of Your Church. Help us to understand more deeply the teachings of the Magisterium, and to embrace them with open hearts and minds.

Holy Spirit, we seek Your gift of understanding. Enlighten our minds to comprehend the teachings of the Church, and strengthen our will to follow them faithfully. May we always be inspired by the example of Jesus, who exercised authority with love, wisdom, and humility.

We pray for all those in positions of authority, that they may be guided by Your wisdom and act in accordance with Your will. Help us, too, in any role of authority we may hold, to lead with compassion, justice, and a deep sense of responsibility.

As we conclude our time together, we entrust our learning and our lives to Your loving care. Lead us on the path of righteousness and keep us faithful to Your Word.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen.

Resources for the Lesson Plan on Authority

[More Themes](#)

[Background Material](#)

[Music Suggestions](#)

[More Youth Ministry Lesson Plans and Reflections](#)