

When you have car troubles, what do you do? Unless you enjoy working with cars, or happen to do it for a living, you go see an authority on cars. You see a mechanic.

When you wake up and the house is a lot colder than it should be, what do you do? Most of us go to an authority on furnaces. You call the H-VAC guy.

When you have a problem, a problem you don't feel confident or competent to fix yourself, you seek the help of someone who is an authority on the problem.

Money troubles? See an accountant. Health problems? See a doctor.

When we are presented with a problem we can't fix, common sense leads us to seek someone who has some kind of authority in that field to fix that problem.

That a good thing – one of the blessings of living in a world where different people have different skill and passions than you, a gift from God. It is a good thing, and it works... to a point. But what happens when you are faced with a problem that no one can fix?

My wife, Laura, and I are in such a predicament...

Most of you know that over the last two years we have been searching for a diagnosis for our little 3-year-old boy Ezra. We've been to authority after authority, specialist after specialist... none of them have had answers, so we've been bounced around from medical authority to medical authority until, most recently, we landed in the office of a particularly well-respected authority named Dr. Donald Basel.

He got his MD from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa (so he has a very intelligent sounding accent ☺). He completed residencies in pediatrics and medical genetics at Oregon Health and Science University, and a fellowship at the University of Connecticut.

He is currently the medical director of the Genetics Center at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, and an Associate Professor and Section Chief of the Genetics Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

He has received the very prestigious awards of Best Doctor in Milwaukee and Best Doctors in America.

In other words, he is a very big man on that big campus between Wisconsin Ave and Watertown Plank Rd.

The other doctors there talk about him in glowing terms. He is a giant in the field of medicine at one of the best Pediatric Hospitals in America. He is an established and proven authority in pediatric medicine.

We are blessed that he's also Ezra's Geneticist.

This last Tuesday Laura and I sat in Dr. Basel's office and finally, after almost two years of searching, received a definitive diagnosis for our little boy.

Ezra has an extremely rare genetic disorder called FARS 2. It is a disorder that affects his mitochondrial system – every single cell in his body fails to produce the energy it is supposed to, which makes every single aspect of life more difficult for our little boy.

Ezra is one of around 20 published cases of FARS 2 in the world.

There we sat with this medical authority, finally receiving an answer for what our little boy has – a blessing from God, without a doubt. But here's the kicker... for all his incredible knowledge and authority, there was very little Dr. Basel could tell us in the way of a prognosis – they simply do not know how this disorder will impact Ezra for the rest of his life. They just don't know.

And that's not because of any personal failing on Dr. Basel's part. It is not as if he hasn't done his homework. It is not that he doesn't understand what is going wrong on a genetic level in Ezra's body. We feel incredibly blessed to have him as our boy's doctor. It's not that another authority could give us answers that Dr. Basel can't. It is simply because he and we have come to the limitations of human medical authority. In this incredibly rare and still relatively newly discovered diagnosis, medical authority has met its match.

Where do we go then? What authority can we turn to when the very best human authorities fall short? That's a very real question Laura and I have and are wrestling with in a big way.

It's also, invariably a question that some in that little congregation in Capernaum were wrestling with in Mark 1.

Demon possession – Like FARS2, it's one of those problems in life where human authority meets its match. Mark doesn't tell us how long this man had been wrestling with this impure spirit. Mark doesn't spell out all of the specialists his family had taken him to in search of help, but demons don't obey the commands of simple men.

Where could they go? To what authority could they turn when the very best human authorities fell short?

Enter Jesus.

That day in Mark 1 Jesus very clearly taught that crowd the difference between human authorities and Authority.

Human authorities are gifts from God, without a doubt. They are one of the ways God blesses and loves us. They are one of the ways God makes living in a sin-wrecked world more tolerable. But, every human authority eventually faces a problem they can't fix... because they are human! And so, while human authorities are gifts from God, they are not God.

It is vitally important that we, people living in a world that breaks in different ways every day, it is important that we remember and realize the limitations of human authorities and then also remember and realize the Authority of Jesus.

He started teaching, and right off the bat the crowd recognized a difference: **Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."**

Jesus taught not just as one who was *an* authority (like all those other teachers of the law who knew an awful lot about God and his Word but had all the limitations of humanity), he taught as the Authority.

I wasn't there, so I don't know what it was about his teaching that made his authority so clear, maybe it was that Jesus taught in an all-knowing kind of way, not a know-it-all kind of way, but all-knowing... like God would teach. Whatever it was, the minute he began to teach it was obvious, every single person in attendance recognized a different kind of Authority.

“Just then,” Mark says, “a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!’”

It wasn't just the people who recognized Authority when they saw it... demons recognized it too. But Jesus didn't need demons to do his preaching for him.

“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly, “Come out of him!” The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.”

Where do we go when the very best human authorities fall short?

The folks in that synagogue in Capernaum came face to face with someone who not only taught like one who had authority, he proved it.

Why does this matter? What is so important about a crowd recognizing Jesus as an Authoritative Teacher? Why is it so important that we realize the difference between Jesus and the other human authorities that surround us?

Well, what do you think this truth means for me and my family?

We have come to the point with our little Ezra where science can no longer give us any more answers, human authority is spent and the problem remains... a big problem at that... FARS 2 in some of the other 20 or so diagnosed cases has led to epilepsy, wheelchair bound, non-communicative suffering, and death... is that what's in store for our Ezra? We don't know. And *no one*, not even the best human authorities, can tell us.

Can you see why I really needed Mark 1 this week? When human authorities fall short, my Jesus does not.

When my Jesus walked this earth he not only taught with a distinctive Authority, he proved that all authority in heaven and on earth was his. He left the greatest human authorities with their mouths hanging open because unlike all human authority, my Jesus' authority has no limitations.

Where do we go when the very best human authorities fall short?

Jesus!

Friends I know some of you here today either now or in your past have been at that point – the point where you come face to face with the undeniable truth that all human authority falls short. I know that some of you here today are wrestling with problems that don't have easy solutions. Even if some of you here today haven't yet reached the point where it becomes obvious that every human authority falls short, I know, and hopefully you are prepared for the fact that life has a way of getting us all to that point in our own time.

I also know that all of us, every single one of us, are tempted to put too much trust in human authorities. Every single one of us is tempted to rely the gift of human authorities rather than on the gift-giver when life gets hard. That is why we worry and stress when we face problems and we aren't sure who or how we are going to overcome them.

It's our way of remaining in control, because if I or another human authority can fix what is wrong with my life, then I still get to have my hands on the controls. Knowledge is power our Dr. reminded us this last Tuesday, and we humans are slow to admit when we are powerless.

But like those folks in that synagogue in Capernaum I want you to recognize Authority when you see it not because he will strike you down if you don't, but because I don't want you to miss out on the message this Authoritative Teacher came to share...

Mark says that after Jesus' amazing display of Authority that day **news (GOOD NEWS) about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.**

News about what?

News about a teacher that only taught authoritatively, but proved it. Good news especially to the broken, the outcast, the unclean, the overwhelmed, good news to those who needed it the most and are desperately ready to listen.

The church season of Epiphany is all about getting to know Jesus better. God sent his Son into the world and every year we spend these weeks after Christmas getting to know who he is because who he is has some incredible implications for who we are and the world we live in.

Friends, be amazed at the powerful Prophet that Moses predicted would come. Be amazed at Jesus our Authoritative Teacher. When human authority, human intellect, human effort reach their limit, Jesus's authority has no limit. There is nothing that does not fall under his control, his direction, his jurisdiction.

He came so that people like that demon possessed man, people like me, Laura, and Ezra, who are at the end of our rope, could know that when we are at the end of our rope, Jesus is just getting started.

He came so that people who are broken under the curse of sin could look to an authority who doesn't just put a Band-Aid on it, but came to heal completely those broken under the curse of sin.

That is your Jesus. That is my Jesus – a powerful prophet with the God-given authority to save those broken by sin.

Amen.