

Bible Authority

Sermons/Class Material

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Author's Preface

After over forty years of writing and preaching the gospel and witnessing brethren argue over various issues with little success, I have realized that until brethren understand Bible authority, many discussions will continue to be mostly fruitless. I view truth and unity among brethren as being of utmost importance, which is why I have compiled this workbook to be distributed freely to the glory of God.

I take no credit for originality. This material comes from many sources I have read over the years. It is presented in outline form to aid in proper organization and facilitate easy presentation in a sermon or class. The PDF file for this workbook, available on my website (www.TotalHealth.bz), was intentionally designed for easy editing by the preacher or teacher, allowing them to present or provide material precisely as they would like. Permission is hereby granted to copy (from the Internet or hard copy), print, and bind this material, provided no changes are made. Changes may be made for use in sermons or class material. Present it boldly and with confidence that it will be readily received and will help teach truth and promote unity.

Robert Waters



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Bible Authority Class # 1

False Standards of Authority No “Latter-Day Revelations”

Introduction

- A. There is no issue among professed Christians that is more fundamental or more important to truth, unity, and faith than the matter of authority.
1. Sound churches emphasize the need to study, learn, accept, and follow biblical authority, whereas churches that do not measure up (to include almost all of the seven churches of Asia, Rev. 1-7) emphasize human tradition and/or worldly activities and projects that demonstrate a lack of faith.
 2. In view of the consequences of failure to properly respect Bible authority, which is failure to respect God, it would be difficult to overemphasize its importance.
- B. Definition of Authority:
“the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.”
- C. There is a great need for authority.
1. We need authority in the home, school, business, and the nation.
 2. Weights and measurements are established and monitored by authority.
 3. The quality of our food and drugs is regulated and monitored by authority.
 4. The speed limits are set and enforced by governmental authority.
 5. Many of the acts forbidden in the Ten Commandments are generally incorporated into the law of the land, and the courts establish and ensure punishment for violators.
 6. Even the money we use is printed/stamped by national governments, and counterfeiting is considered a very serious crime.
- D. Without authority, and respect for it there would be confusion, disorder, and chaos.
1. An Old Testament example recorded in the book of Judges illustrates what it is like when people do not respect authority.
 - a. The passage says, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).
 - b. **Gil Commentary:** “there being none to restrain him from it, or punish him for it; and this accounts for the many evil things related.”
 2. Failure to understand and respect the proper and ONLY authority in religion is the reason for the division and confusion in the religious world today.
 - a. There obviously cannot be more than one true authority in religion because if there were many they would be in conflict, like an animal with two heads.
 - b. Many religious groups claim to respect God but are simply doing what is right in their own eyes, or basically what they want to do.
 - c. This is very unfortunate because the Bible exhorts Christians to “all speak the same thing” (I Cor. 1:10), and that we should all walk by the same rule (Phi. 3:16).

- d. Jesus tells us many will be rejected at the judgment because of iniquity or lawlessness:

Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

John adds (2 John 9-11): Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

- e. In other words, walking outside the rules that the Lord has set up for us will put one on the road to destruction.

E. Before we get into the lesson proper, I want to emphasize the importance of this subject.

1. What used to be commonly understood and practiced by churches of Christ is now often rejected and laughed at, and its proponents ridiculed.
2. Some members of the church endeavor (seemingly tirelessly) to scoff at and malign brethren who demand book, chapter, and verse for what we teach and practice.
3. What I'm seeing some people write, when discussing authority, tells me they have no concept of the need for authority in religion and no understanding as to how to establish it.

a. They simply have not been taught.

1) Unfortunately, many cannot be taught because they are content with their situation and are determined to please themselves.

2) The need for biblical authority for what is believed and practiced seems to be of no concern to many today who profess Christianity.

i. Even the Pharisees of Jesus' day (a generally unfaithful religious sect of the Jews) questioned by what authority He did what He did.

Matthew 21:23-27 And when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell Me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

ii. Of course, Jesus answered in no uncertain terms.

- b. The poor attitude that many have today toward authority is why there is a great need for teaching on this subject.
- c. We must learn from the above text that authority not only is needed and important, but it must be the proper authority.

Body

I. There are false standards of authority.

- A. First, the only standard of authority for the church Jesus established is the teaching revealed in the New Testament.
 - 1. While not denying that the Gospels are part of the New Testament, Jesus dealt with issues related to the concerns and problems of His Jewish brethren who had turned away from God and established their own traditions (Matt. 15:9).
 - 2. The church, as a corporate body, gets its authority from the writings of the apostles—mainly epistles written to local churches.
- B. Unfortunately, from time to time, various "false standards" are set forth as authority for some particular act or activity proposed for a church.
- C. Acting based on any one of the "standards" below would be unlawful:
 - 1. Sometimes, when proposing a collective action for the church, a brother will say, "The denominations are doing this, **and we need to do it.**"
 - a. Perhaps the motive is to "keep up with the Joneses."
 - b. God's people have always been warned about pride, and trying to please men rather than God.
 - 1) If in pleasing God men are pleased, it is good; but we should not endeavor to please men at the expense of displeasing God.
 1 Thess. 2:4 **But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.**
 Gal. 1:10 **For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.**
 - 2) The Old Testament was written for our learning (Rom. 15:4).
 - i. From God's dealings with Israel we can learn the danger of wanting to be like all the nations that had a king.
 1 Sam. 8:5 **And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.**
 - ii. We must be careful and look for divine authority for what we do and avoid doing things simply because others are doing them.
 - 2. In support of some proposed practice, or defense of one, someone might say, **"Faithful brethren have practiced this for many years."**
 - a. A statement of a "pioneer" preacher or even someone still living today is sometimes cited as authority.

- b. The official position of a brotherhood journal might be looked to for authority.
 - c. “Faithful brethren” are not acceptable authority because men can be wrong, and our faith should not stand in them (1 Cor. 2:5).
 - d. Some things may be wrong and if practiced consistently for a long period of time they become traditions.
 - e. The Book of God warns against looking to traditions of men for authority.
 - 1) **Paul: Col. 2:8** Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
 - 2) **Jesus: Matt. 15:1-14** Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. 3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. 7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. 12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.
 - f. The authority of God is the only thing that makes a religious practice right.
3. Someone might quote some "great" religious leader as authority to prove their point or justify a questionable practice that some preacher of note instigated.
- a. He might say, "Do you think you are smarter than he is?"
 - b. Such reasoning is based upon a false "standard."
 - 1) Our faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Cor. 2:5 **That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**
 - 2) Only one person didn't make mistakes—Jesus Christ.
 - 3) Even Peter, an apostle, practiced error at one time (Gal. 2:11).

- 4) We must not place so much confidence in one man, or even a group of men, that we feel so comfortable following their teaching that we do not need to study for ourselves and question what they teach.
 - i. The Christians at Berea “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things” the apostles taught were true (Acts 17:11).
 - ii. They were spoken of as being “noble”.
4. Some brother might argue in defense of some practice, or to justify what he proposes, by saying, “It’s a good work” or “We are doing good.”
 - a. This argument is based on the assumption that the end justifies the means, which Paul dealt with in no uncertain words.
Rom. 3:8 **And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.**
 - b. We must not do "evil" (transgress the law of God) in hopes that good may result.
 - c. If a thing is scriptural, it will be good, but not all good things are right for the church to do.
 - 1) Mechanical music is good in many places, but not when the saints come together for worship.
 - 2) Cornbread, fried potatoes, and steak are good at the dinner table, but not on the Lord's Table.
 - 3) It is also true that some things an individual or a secular institution may do are not lawful for the church to perform.
 - i. Some local benevolent group might have an auction or a pie supper to raise money for some unfortunate family, but it would not be right (scriptural) for the church to engage in such practices.
 - ii. In a future lesson, we will show that only a freewill offering on the Lord’s day is good and right for a church.
 - iii. Churches must have divine authority for what is practiced.
5. When questioned for authority for some proposed practice, someone might say: **“I would rather do wrong than do nothing at all.”**
 - a. We learn from the parable of the talents that inactivity is not good (Matt. 25:14-30).
 - b. We should always seek to promote scriptural work designed to bring the lost into the Lord’s church, but one who makes the above statement is guilty of fallacious reasoning.
 - 1) He is assuming that the only choices are **wrong** or **nothing**, but this is not true.
 - 2) We have the choice of:
 - i. doing nothing and being wrong;
 - ii. doing wrong, which is wrong; or
 - iii. doing right, which is the correct course to follow.
6. Only if we have authority for what we do can we have faith that we are right.

II. There has been and will not be a later-day revelation.

A. The word of God teaches us that the Holy Spirit would continue to directly inspire men only until the Bible was completed.

1 Cor. 13:8-13 (ASV) Love never fails. Now if there are prophecies, they will be done away with. If there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will be done away with. For what we know is incomplete and what we prophesy is incomplete. But when what is complete comes, then what is incomplete will be done away with. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up my childish ways. Now we see only a blurred reflection in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now what I know is incomplete, but then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. Right now three things remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1. Add to this **Jude 3-5**, where we learn to “contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” which tells us the Bible was completed.
2. In **James 1:25**, we learn that the gospel of Jesus Christ is referred to as the “perfect law of liberty.”
3. And, in **2 Tim. 3:16, 17**, we are told: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [the word means complete or mature], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
4. Peter clearly states that God “has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

B. Thus, doctrine does not come from direct inspiration today.

1. It comes from the word of God—the Bible.
2. If we allow ourselves to be **reproved, corrected, and instructed by the completed word of God**, it will, in turn, make us **perfect or complete** and **completely furnish us for every good work** (2 Tim. 3:16,17).
3. In other words, if the religion we practice is going to be from **heaven** and not **men**, it will have to come from the **Bible**.
 - a. Consequently, what the Bible **says**, and **does not say**, is very important!
 - b. The following passage is a warning (found in two places) that should be heeded by those tempted to listen to any source of authority or revelation other than the Bible:
Prov. 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Conclusion

A. Disciples of Christ must be content to do God's will, which is to take action only if He has authorized it through Scripture, rather than seek to justify something by a false standard.

- B. Our Creator knows what is best and He has told us how He wants things done.
- C. Our responsibility is to “Trust and Obey, for there is No Other Way.”

Much credit for the material in this chapter goes to: Ferrell Jenkins for his article in *Truth Magazine*; May, 1962; Vol. VI, No. 8, pp. 17-18.

Bible Authority -- Lesson # 1 Review Questions

1. Define "authority."
2. Where is authority needed?
3. What happens if there is no authority?
4. Cite the passage that tells us about the time everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
5. Could lack of respect for authority, or not understanding it, be a reason for the division in the religious world?
6. Cite some passages that teach contrary to the idea of doing what we want to in religion.
7. Name the passage where Jesus tells us many will be rejected because of lawlessness.
8. What passage tells us that those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ **“have not God”**?
9. What passage shows the need for authority in religion?
10. What passage shows where authority comes from?
11. Authority is either from _____ or of _____.
12. Where must the church look for authority?
13. List some false standards of authority.
14. List some passages that teach that what others are doing in religion is not what we should look to when considering whether some practice would be appropriate?

15. What passage teaches against the idea that the “end justifies the means”?
16. In religious practice we have the choice of:
doing _____ and being wrong,
doing _____, or
doing _____.
17. If we have authority for what we do in religion we will surely be _____.

Bible Authority Class # 2

Who Has Authority in Religion and How Do We Establish It?

What the Bible Does Not Say Is Important

The Word Is Able to Make Us Complete

(Part 1 of 2)

Introduction

- A. In our previous study we discussed false standards of authority.
- B. In this lesson we will discuss the source of authority and the necessity that disciples speak “as the oracles of God,” and then we will discuss how to establish authority or, in other words, how to determine what the Bible teaches.

Body

- I. **Only two sources of authority exist in religion as illustrated by what Jesus said:**
Matthew 21:23-27 And when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?** And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell Me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from **heaven**, or of **men**? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From **heaven**; He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of **men**; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.
 - A. In this passage, the Lord makes it very clear that there are only **two sources of authority** in religion—**heaven** or **men**.
 - B. Unfortunately, we live in a world where many people, like the ancient Jews, are content to establish their own man-made righteousness.
Listen to the apostle Paul:
Rom. 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.
 - C. This is the sad state of affairs in the denominational world even today.

II. All authority is inherent in God.

- A. Those who are truly disciples of Christ are endeavoring to follow the authority from **heaven**.
1. We are trying to speak as the “**oracles of God**” (1 Peter 4:11).
 2. We are trying to “**speak the same thing**” (1 Cor. 1:10).
 3. We are all trying to “**walk by the same rule**” (Phi. 3:16).
 - a. As such, we recognize **God the Father** as the one with **all authority**.
 - b. Although the Bible says He gave “**all authority**” to His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18, 19; Phi. 2:9-11), **He** (the Father) nevertheless is the only one exempted from the rule or authority of His Son (1 Cor. 15:27).
- B. All authority has been given to the Son:
Hebrews 1:1, 2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these **last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.**
1. Furthermore, when Jesus was transfigured, the Father spoke from heaven saying: “**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him**” (Matt. 17:5).
 2. Finally, Jesus says,
John 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.
- C. The **words** of the Lord Jesus Christ are going to judge us all on the last day, and **no one** is going to be exempted from His authority.

III. Jesus delegated authority to His apostles.

- A. Our Lord declared, “**As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world**” (John 17:18).
1. This means that authority had been delegated to the apostles to “**bind**” and “**loose**” on earth what had been **bound** or **loosed** in **heaven** (Matt. 16:19; 18:18).
 2. To aid them in this work, Jesus said the Father would send the Holy Spirit to the apostles **in His name**, which means “**by His authority**” (John 14:26).
- B. Jesus went on to say, “**He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.**”
1. This was for the express purpose of guiding the apostles into all truth (John 16:13, 14).
 2. Jesus said, “**He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me**” (Matt. 10:40).
 - a. This clearly shows that the apostles were the official representatives (ambassadors) of Christ on earth (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20).

- b. In connection with the “binding” and “loosing” work of which Matt. 16:19 and 18:18 speak, Peter, an apostle, was promised “the keys of the kingdom.”
 - 1) The term “key” is commonly used in the Bible to represent authority.
 - 2) For example, in Isaiah 22:22, God had this to say about the authority He would give to Eliakim:

“And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

 - i. As one can see, the term is used in this passage to mean **power** and **authority**.
 - ii. This same expression and idea is conveyed in Rev. 3:7, which says, “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the *key of David*, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”
 - iii. In this passage, the “key of David” represents the authority of Christ; and the apostles had the authority to **bind** and **loose**, which means they had the right to command those who heard them (2 Peter 3:1,2; 1 John 1:3,4; 1 Cor. 2:10-13; 14:37).
 - iv. This meant only that they were the ones authorized by the Lord to inform the world regarding what had been *bound* and *loosed* by the gospel of Jesus Christ—not that they could make law.

IV. The necessity to “speak as the oracles of God.”

- A. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13) so that they could ultimately guide others into all truth.
- B. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Ephesians 3:1-11 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. The word of God teaches us that the Holy Spirit continued to directly inspire men until the Bible was completed (1 Cor. 13:8-13).
 2. But in Jude 3-5, we learn that we are to contend for the faith “**once for all delivered to the saints,**” which tells us the Bible was completed.
 3. Again, in James 1:25, we learn that the gospel of Jesus Christ is referred to as the “**perfect law of liberty,**” which tells us nothing more is needed.
 4. And, in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, we are told that: “**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.**”
 5. Finally, in 2 Peter 1:3, the Bible clearly says that God “**has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.**”
 - a. In light of these passages, and the others noted above, it is safe to say that all the Holy Scriptures have been completed, which is why the apostle Peter admonished: “**If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.**”
 - b. Contrary to what some teach, there will be no latter-day revelation.
- C. Doctrine does not come from direct inspiration today.
1. It comes, instead, from the word of God—the Bible.
 2. If we allow ourselves to be reproved, corrected, and instructed by the completed word of God, it will, in turn, make us perfect or complete, and will **completely furnish us for every good work** (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
 - a. In other words, if the religion we practice is going to be from heaven and not men, then it will have to come from the Bible.
 - b. Therefore, what the Bible says, and does not say, is very important!

V. Determining what the Bible says.

- A. We determine what the Bible says in three ways.
 1. Direct statements or commands,
 2. Approved examples, and
 3. Necessary conclusions.
- B. Direct statements, approved examples, and necessary conclusions are all equally binding when applicable.
 1. When God employs any of these methods to teach, He is instructing us in what we should know about His will for us.
 2. Let us spend some time with each one of these methods.

VI. The Bible instructs us by direct statements.

- A. For instance, in Acts 17:30, we find a direct statement or command to repent: **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”**
1. In Acts 2:38, the Bible teaches by means of a *direct statement* that repentance and baptism are both necessary for one to obtain the remission of sins.
 2. In Heb. 10:25, we are taught by a direct statement that we ought not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.
 3. In Col. 3:9, we are taught (again, by a direct statement) that lying is wrong.
 4. The teachings in these passages are examples of what we are talking about when we say that one of the ways the Bible teaches us is by direct statements.
- B. Occasionally someone argues that there are **no commandments** in the New Testament for Christians other than to love one another.
1. But that idea contradicts what Paul clearly teaches.
1 Cor. 14:37 **If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.**
 2. The apostles could not make up the rules, but they were the ones authorized by the Lord to inform the world what had been *bound* and *loosed* by the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 3. Clearly, their teachings were commands that are directed to Christians, which is something that will be addressed further in another lesson.

VII. In addition to teaching by direct statements, the Bible teaches us through approved examples.

- A. For instance, in instructing His disciples about partaking of the Lord's Supper, the Lord said regarding the bread, **“And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me”** (1 Cor. 11:24).
- B. And about the fruit of the vine, He said, **“After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me”** (1 Cor. 11:25).
1. Using a *direct statement*, the Lord instructed His disciples that they should partake of the Lord's Supper **“in remembrance of Him”**; but, He did not tell them **when** they should do so.
 - a. We learn the “when” another way.
 - b. “When” is determined by an *approved example* found in Acts 20:7.
 2. In this passage, we learn that the early church partook of the Lord's Supper on the ***first day of the week***, which is Sunday or **“the Lord's day”** (Rev. 1:10).

- a. We call it *approved* in that an apostle was there when it was done and he did not speak against its being done on the first day of the week, which is to say he *approved it*.
 - b. In fact, Acts 20:6 tells us that Paul stayed in Troas for seven days.
 - 1) This seems to indicate that he waited in Troas so he could partake of the Lord's Supper with the church there.
 - 2) So, here we have an *approved example* of **when** the early church did what the Lord told it to do as pertaining to the Lord's Supper.
- C. Another instance of an *approved example* is churches relieving other churches in the case of benevolence.
1. The text tells us that there was a famine throughout the whole world and that Judea was especially affected.
Acts 11:29, 30 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.
 - a. Here, then, is something the early church participated in that was *approved* by the apostle Paul.
 - b. Therefore, by this *approved example* we know that churches of Christ can “send relief” to other churches of Christ when those churches are in need.
 2. We also learn by *approved example* (from this same text) **WHEN** to give for the work of the church—or take up the contribution.
 - a. Some in the church today criticize the idea of GIVING only on the “first day of the week.”
 - b. They do not see it as being authoritatively binding.
 - c. They might argue that the giving was just for that ONE purpose—benevolence.
 - 1) While that is true, it nevertheless sets forth the day of the week to “lay by in store” for the church's needs.
 - 2) Since there is no other day specified for **WHEN** to take collections for the needs of the church, we can conclude that the “first day of the week” is authorized.
 - i. “Churches of Christ” are generally united on this.
 - ii. Unfortunately, many denominations take up collections every time they come together.
 - d. We could do like most denominations and take up a collection every time we come together, but then that would be contrary to the lesson we have learned regarding our need to look to the Bible for authority for what we do as a church.
 - 1) Thus, we could not do it by faith.
 - 2) If it is not of faith, it is sin (Rom. 14:23).
 - 3) There can be unity in truth on this matter only if we follow the teaching.

- D. In these examples we see how God's word instructs us as to what is acceptable by means of *approved examples*.
- E. Occasionally, we hear someone argue that there are no examples except Christ.
 - 1. He, being sinless, certainly set for us the perfect example, but there is no reason to conclude that other examples that God chose to use in teaching us should be disregarded.
 - 2. Later, when we study patterns, we will examine several passages that support the idea that various examples are important and must be followed.

Conclusion

- A. In this lesson (part 1 of 2) we have discussed the source of authority, the necessity that disciples speak “**as the oracles of God,**” and how to establish authority or, in other words, how to determine what the Bible teaches.
- B. In addition to teaching by *direct statements* and *approved examples* (discussed in this lesson) the Bible instructs us by a third method, *necessary conclusion*, which we will address in our next lesson.

Bible Authority Class # 3

Who Has Authority in Religion and How Do We Establish It?

What the Bible Does Not Say Is Important

The Word Can Make Us Complete

Part 2 of 2

Introduction

- A. In the previous lesson we began a two-part study of how to establish authority or, in other words, how to determine what the Bible teaches.
 - 1. We learned that Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper, which God teaches using a *direct statement* (1 Cor. 11:24, 25; Matt. 26:26-27).
 - 2. We showed how, by approved example (Acts 20:7), we are to take the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.
 - 3. In this lesson, we will see how a THIRD way of establishing authority is used to teach that the Lord's Supper is to be taken EVERY first day of the week.

- B. The third way to establish authority, or determine what the Bible teaches us, is through *necessary conclusions*.

Body

I. What is a *necessary conclusion*?

- A. Definition of "*conclusion*" (Dictionary.com).
 - 1. *A reasoned deduction or inference.*
 - 2. *Logic. a proposition concluded or inferred from the premises of an argument.*

- B. Not all conclusions are "*necessary conclusions*."
 - 1. For example, a police officer walked into a room after hearing two gun shots and found two bodies on the floor and a man standing over one body with gun in hand.
 - a. The officer concluded (assumed) that the man with the gun murdered them both.
 - b. It was a conclusion, but not a necessary one because all the facts had not yet been gathered.
 - c. After tests for gun powder residue were taken, and found to be negative, it was concluded, and necessarily so, that the man holding the gun had shot no one and that the shooter fled the scene before the officer arrived.
 - d. In our example, above, an overly excited and less than level-headed police officer could have acted on a conclusion that was not *necessary* and have shot an innocent person.

2. The difference between a *conclusion* and a *necessary conclusion* is that a *necessary conclusion* is the only conclusion one can come to based on the information provided.
- C. Bible examples where *necessary conclusion* is applied:
1. Teaching that baptism is by immersion.

In Matthew 3:16, the Bible says,
And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.

 - a. Now, consider the phrase “*out of the water.*”
 - b. The only conclusion we can come to, which is a *necessary conclusion*, is that since Jesus **came up out of the water** He must have been **in** the water.
 - 1) One simply cannot come up out of something he was never in.
 - 2) Consequently, although the Bible does not say by *direct statement* that Jesus was immersed, it does teach us this through the *necessary conclusion* method of teaching.
 - c. Thus, we learn by “*necessary conclusion*” that baptism is not a *pouring* or *sprinkling* that can be done with a thimble full of water.
 2. Let us consider yet another example of a *necessary conclusion*.

Matt. 22:23-33 *The same day came to Him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked Him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine.*

 - a. Jesus informed these Sadducees that they had erred in not knowing the Scriptures (verse 29).
 - b. They had failed to understand the *necessary conclusion* in God’s statement to Moses: “**I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**”
 - 1) God did not say “**I was**” (past tense) but “**I am**” (present tense).
 - 2) Thus, it was necessarily inferred that there was life after death—that is, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive spiritually.
 - c. Many seem to disregard the importance of *necessary conclusions*.
 - 1) This is a serious mistake.

- 2) This is the same mistake that some made in Jesus' day.
3. From "*necessary conclusion*" we learn what God teaches regarding the frequency of the Lord's Supper.

Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

- a. We previously learned that this text teaches by using an approved example what day the early church took part in the Lord's Supper.
 - 1) We look to this exact text to learn **how often** they partook of it.
 - 2) Did God intend to leave it to church leadership to determine how often to take the Lord's Supper, or is there reason to conclude that He did not, but was **specific** on the matter?
- b. Based upon the information that is provided in the text, we can *necessarily infer* that the early church partook of the Lord's Supper **every** first day of every week.
 - 1) We know that faith comes from hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).
 - 2) Furthermore, the word of God says that everything that is **not of faith is sin** (Rom. 14:23).
 - 3) Therefore, if we are going to know what to do, then it is going to have to come from God's word, otherwise, there can be no unity among disciples as to the frequency of the Lord's Supper.
- c. If God wanted us to partake of the memorial supper once a year or once a month, would He not have provided us with the **day**?
 - 1) If He wanted us to partake of it once a week, would He not have told us **day of the week**?
 - 2) This is exactly what He did! Therefore, **by faith**, we partake of the Lord's Supper the first day of every week.
- d. When God said, "**Remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy**" (Ex. 20:10), He did not have to say, "every week."
 - 1) This is because every week had a Sabbath.
 - 2) The Jews, then, understood that they were to keep **every** Sabbath of **every week** holy, which is what they did.
4. The lesson we need to learn here is that the Bible does not teach us truth only by *direct statements* and *approved examples*; it also teaches us through *necessary conclusions* and we had better be serious and accept what God teaches us through all these means.

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II. What the Bible does not say is also very important.

- A. Even after we get people to understand how the Bible teaches us, there are still two attitudes to consider regarding the silence of the Scriptures.
 1. The first of these attitudes says that **when the Bible is silent, then we are at liberty to act as we think best.**

- a. If the Bible does not expressly prohibit something, then it is permissible.
- b. This attitude is reflected in the actions of many religious people.
2. The second attitude says that **where the Bible is silent, we are not at liberty to act, but must be silent also**, which is precisely the attitude taught in the Bible.
 - a. Peter informs us, **“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”** (1 Pet. 4:11).
 - b. Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17).
 - c. In Rom. 14:23, we read that **whatever is not of faith is sin**.
 - 1) Therefore, silence about a matter does not give consent, as many people think.
 - 2) Rather, it prohibits.
 - d. The apostle Paul teaches that one should not think of men **“above that which is written”** (1 Cor. 4:6).
 - 1) This means that the word of God—the Scriptures—is the absolute standard of authority in all things religious.
 - 2) Ultimately, what **men say or do not say is unimportant**.
 - 3) It is not only important what God says but also what He **does not say!**

B. Examples illustrating the Silence Concept.

1. Noah as a positive example.
 - a. God told Noah to construct an ark out of **“gopher wood”** (Gen. 6:14).
 - b. In doing so, God did not have to say, **“And thou shall not construct it from pine, cedar, oak, or any other kind of wood.”**
 - 1) All God had to do was tell Noah what kind of wood to use.
 - 2) The fact that He **specified** the type of wood eliminated every other type of wood.

Heb. 11:7 **By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.**

 - i. Here the Bible clearly tells us that Noah was saved by faith.
 - ii. And we know that Paul tells us faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17).
 - c. Noah, upon hearing God's word, was moved by faith to prepare the ark as God had instructed him.
 - 1) In doing so, Noah saved himself and his family.
 - 2) Even though God did not specifically say not to use some other kind of wood, it is certain that if Noah had built the ark out of any other kind of wood than gopher, he would not have pleased God and consequently would not have been saved.
 - 3) The point is that what God **does not say** is just as important as what He says!
2. Nadab And Abihu as negative examples.

Leviticus 10:1, 2 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

- a. The text tells us about men who were priests of God that were involved in religious activity, but displeased God with their actions.
- b. Their actions, in offering “**strange fire,**” were sinful because what they offered had not been authorized by the Lord.
 - 1) In other words, what God has **not** commanded is just as important as what He **has** commanded.
 - 2) These two men were put to death (made examples of) because they assumed it was okay for them to **go beyond** what God had authorized.
3. The priesthood of Christ as an example.
 - a. Speaking of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the Hebrew writer says, “**For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.**”
 - b. Under the Old Covenant, Jesus (of the tribe of Judah) could not be a priest because He did not come from the tribe of Levi.
 - 1) Regarding the Levitical priesthood, Moses said **nothing** about Judah.
 - 2) Consequently, for Jesus to be a priest, there would have to be a change of the law.
 - 3) Jesus, then, our current high priest, is the mediator of a “**better covenant**” (Heb. 7:22).
 - c. The example above impresses upon us the fact that what God does not say is just as important as what He does say.
 - 1) Where does the New Testament say anything about:
 - i. Sprinkling or pouring for baptism;
 - ii. Baptizing infants;
 - iii. Instrumental music in New Testament worship;
 - iv. Women preachers; and
 - v. The use of the title “Reverend” by men?
 - 2) Therefore, things not “mentioned” or authorized are not from **heaven** but from **men!**

III. The inspired word can make us complete.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

- A. The phrase “**given by the inspiration of God**” assures us that when we read the Bible we are hearing from God.
 1. That Scripture is authoritative is affirmed by the apostle Peter, who wrote,

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20, 21).

2. Paul further illustrates the point in his letter to the Corinthians.
But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:10-13).
- B. Peter assures us that through the Scriptures we have all the information we need.
1. According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3).
 2. Since the knowledge we have of Jesus Christ, that comes from the inspired word of God, provides us with “all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” what more do we need?

Conclusion

- A. As children of God and members of Christ’s church, we must look to Him for authority to act in religion.
1. He has always demanded things be done His way, and this is because He knows best.
Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.
 2. If we want to prosper in what we do, we must respect His authority and do things His way.
- B. Failure to look to God for guidance will mean we are “on our own,” which means we get no help from God and will not receive the promises He has made to the faithful.

Credits for this chapter: RE:THINKING (Website), How to Establish Authority, Allen Turner.

Bible Authority -- Lesson # 3

Review Questions

1. Define Authority
2. Where is authority needed?
3. What happens if there is no authority?
4. Where do we find the passage that tells us about the time everyone did what was right in his own eyes?
5. How can respect for authority and understanding it help to promote unity in truth?

6. Site some passages that teach contrary to the idea of doing what we want to in religion.
7. Name the passage where Jesus tells us many will be rejected because of lawlessness?
8. What passage tells us that those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ have “**have not God**”?
9. What passage can we use to show others the need for authority in religion, which also teaches there are two sources of authority?
10. Name the two sources of authority.
11. Where must the church look for authority?
12. Name some false standards of authority?

13. List some passages that teach that we must look to the word of God, rather than what others are doing, when considering whether some practice is scriptural?

14. What passage teaches against the idea that the “end justifies the means”?
15. What was wrong with Israel’s Zeal?
16. What will judge us in the last day? Site the passage.
17. Site the passages that teach that all authority has been given to Jesus.

18. To whom did Jesus delegate authority?
19. The apostles had authority to **bind** and **loose** what had been **bound** in **heaven**.
True or False.
20. Who was sent to aid the apostles in their work of presenting God’s will?

21. Jesus said, “**He that receiveth ___ receiveth ___.**”
22. What does the “key of David” represent?
23. The apostles could make up rules? True or False
24. When would the Holy Spirit stop inspiring men?
What passage supports your answer?
25. What important lesson can we learn from **Jude 3-5**?

26. Site the text where we learn that the gospel is the “perfect law of liberty.”
27. What should we conclude from the fact that scripture can make a man “complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”? Name the passage.

28. Where in the New Testament do we find the phrase, “hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness”?
29. From where should all doctrine taught in the church come?
30. Name the three ways we establish authority or learn what God wants us to know and do.

31. What method did Jesus use to teach us to observe the Lord’s Supper?
Cite the passage.
32. In the above text, did Jesus instruct as to WHEN they should partake of the supper?
Yes or No
33. Which of the three ways of establishing authority do we learn WHEN (the day) we should take the Lord’s Supper? Site the passage.
34. Which of the three ways of establishing authority do we learn when to GIVE?
Site the passage.
35. Is it true that the “first day of the week” is the only day noted in scripture telling us *when* to take up contributions? Yes or No
36. What action should church leaders take to ensure God’s authority is respected regarding when the Lord's Supper is taken?

37. If God had not mentioned a day for taking the Lord’s Supper in the Bible what could we then conclude?

38. What is a *conclusion*?

39. When is a *conclusion* presumptuous?

40. What is meant by “*necessary conclusion*” or “inference”?

41. Name a Bible example where we learn by *necessary conclusion*.

Bible Authority Class # 4

“CENI”

Introduction

- A. No issue among professed Christians is more fundamental to unity, faith, and truth than the matter of authority.
- B. To what, or to whom, Christians should look for authority is an important question.
 - 1. Some look to the Pope or the church for authority.
 - 2. Others look to the writings of men that may be in the form of some book, supposedly received from God, or from some written creed that states the beliefs of a particular denomination.
 - 3. Even in the “Church of Christ,” many look to journals that are intended to teach and promote certain issues.
 - 4. Those wanting to please God should look ONLY to the inspired word, the Bible, for religious guidance.
 - a. If we do, unity pleasing to God can be achieved.
 - b. The apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their division and party names and said “**that there be no divisions among you**” (1 Cor. 1:10).
 - c. Christ prayed for unity so the world might believe (John 17:17-21).
 - d. Paul wrote, “**God is not the author of confusion, but of peace**” (1 Cor. 14:33).
 - 1) This being the case, the division and resulting confusion responsible for much of the world's unbelief is man's fault, not God's.
 - 2) We seek peace and unity by encouraging others to respect God’s authority.
- C. Our concern in studying Bible authority is to discuss matters that should help bring about the unity for which our Lord prayed.

Body

I. We have studied various ways that God teaches through the Bible.

- 1) Commands or direct statements.
 - 2) Examples approved by the apostles; and
 - 3) Necessary inferences or conclusions.
- A. Unfortunately, these three ways God uses to teach have been reduced to an *acronym*, which is now often referred to as “CENI.”
 - 1. I do not even like to use "CENI" in writing or speaking because it is used as a system, making the concept appear to be something it is not.
 - 2. It is a way of establishing authority used in all areas of authority: military, school, government, home, etc.

3. Liberals in the church hate it because they do not want to be restricted in what they can do.
 - a. They have their own ideas and are confident in their own wisdom about what works and what is best; and so they seek to defend their beliefs and practices by attacking through labels, misrepresentations, and false accusations.
 - b. They make fun of “CENI” and ridicule it, as do those who advocate its use.
 - c. They endeavor to discredit it and to build prejudice so that others do not, or cannot, hear.
 - d. Those who threaten their freedom and liberty are labeled as “modern-day Pharisees,” charged with “making law,” and accused of causing division.
 - e. Some might be deserving of the Pharisee charge, but this is because they teach that if one is wrong on anything, then he/she is lost, but this is another subject.

- B. Those that oppose “CENI” look upon divine authority in religion as being too restrictive—they want to gratify their own desires rather than honor and glorify God.
 1. They argue that the New Testament is all about LOVE and that **there are no commandments for us**—just follow Jesus’ example, they say.
 - a. That the above is false doctrine becomes evident when the following passage is brought to light:
1 Cor. 14:37 *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*
 - b. The idea that the church needs authority for anything is sometimes ridiculed.
 - 1) Even what we do on Sunday—the authorized acts of worship: singing, praying, Lord’s Supper, studying the Bible, and “giving”—is mocked.
 - 2) On a Facebook group, when the acts of worship were under discussion, one fellow wrote, “There is actually one more—the announcements.”
 - c. Those who oppose authority, as we have outlined it, generally are the ones on the front lines, endeavoring to defend instrumental music in the worship of the church.
 - 1) These people have little or no concept of the need for authority.
 - 2) Yet they are all too happy to write and speak as if they are experts on authority and hermeneutics.
 2. These objectors are basically unbelievers because they deny the teaching in the passages below that give commands to churches.”
 - a. Paul exhorted the church at Corinth to be sure people are edified by what is spoken.
1 Cor. 14:15 *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. 16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that **occupieth the room** of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?*

- 1) In conjunction with this, Paul said, “**Let all things be done decently and in order**” (1 Cor. 14:40).
 - 2) The application to us would be to speak in a language everyone can understand and to speak where all can hear.
- b. Paul issued a command for unity.
- 1 Cor. 1:10** Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **all speak the same thing**, and that there **be no divisions** among you; but that ye be **perfectly joined together** in the same mind and in the same judgment.
- 1) Churches obey this command as they use good hermeneutics in studying the word of God.
 - 2) This enables them to understand, learn, and put into practice things the New Testament teaches regarding church responsibility.
- c. Paul gave a command to the church at Corinth to deal with a man that was guilty of fornication.
- 1 Cor. 5:4-5** In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **when ye are gathered together**, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, **5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**
- 1) If there were no commands for churches to follow, as some anti-authority brethren contend, then it would be okay to allow fornication.
 - 2) But such heresy, according to Paul, would result in the destruction of the Lord’s church.
- 1 Cor. 5:5-13** To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. **6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.**

II. Many view the ways of establishing authority as a hermeneutic (a way of interpreting the Scriptures).

A. What is a hermeneutic?

1. Hermeneutic is defined as: *“the science or branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation.”*
 2. Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible.
 3. There are, of course, both GOOD and BAD methods involved in the use of hermeneutics, which is why I often emphasize the need to use GOOD hermeneutics.
 4. Someone asks, “Who gets to CHOOSE?”
 - a. Well, each of us does.
 - b. For example, you can choose to just pluck a scripture out of the Bible that supports the idea of faith's being a requirement for salvation, and based on it alone believe and teach **that** “faith only” is all you need, but this is BAD hermeneutics.
 - 1) Or, you can decide that it makes more sense to understand what faith means and what other scriptures on the subject of salvation have to say about man’s part in salvation.
 - 2) The applicable rule would be: “Obtain and study all the scriptures on a subject and then endeavor to draw a conclusion that allows them to be in harmony.”
- B. While there is hermeneutical value to be derived from recognizing *commands*, *examples*, and *implications*, it is my opinion that these should not be classified as a *hermeneutic* but are merely **ways**, **means**, or **avenues** by which God has set forth His will in Scripture to which hermeneutics must be applied.
1. The word "*command*" does not really convey what is intended with this term.
 - a. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that God communicates His will through various kinds of *statements*.
 - b. Some statements may be *declarative*, such as are found in the beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12).
 - 1) These are not commands per se, yet we all understand that Jesus expects His followers to possess the qualities noted.
 - 2) Of course, direct commands are also found in many places in the Scriptures (Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 16:15; Acts 10:48; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thess. 3:6).
 2. God expects His children today to follow numerous examples found in the New Testament (Acts 2:42, 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2)—both collectively (as a church) and as individuals.
 3. God also implies certain truths in the communication of His will to man.
 - a. For example, in refuting the Sadducees' lack of faith in the resurrection Jesus pointed out that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mark 12:24-27).
 - b. Therefore, the Sadducees could *necessarily infer* that those patriarchs were alive, and see that their own doctrine was contrary to the Scriptures.

- C. Thus, through *statements, examples, and implications*, God has communicated His will to us.
1. However, *statements, examples, and implications*—some label CENI—do not constitute a *hermeneutic*.
 2. It is after we have read the statements, studied the examples, and considered the inferences, that the diligent work of interpreting God's word and properly applying it to our lives begins.
- D. In recent years some seem to have determined to make it their mission to denigrate and to attempt to dismantle what they refer to as "the CENI hermeneutic."
1. But in so doing, they attack a "straw man" because CENI is not a hermeneutic.
 2. Rather, to the statements, the examples, and the implications of Scriptures, we must apply good hermeneutics, which is to say we must use one or more rules for Bible study—rules that make sense.
 3. We must understand that CENI can be misused—that it will not work unless we apply good hermeneutics.
 - a. For example, in Matt. 27:5 we see that Judas was sorrowful for betraying Jesus: **“And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”**
 - b. One could say this teaches, by *example*, that we must go and hang ourselves when we do something terrible.
 - 1) Those who oppose “CENI” see such texts as proof that “CENI” does not work.
 - i. But it does work IF we apply good hermeneutics.
 - ii. Several rules for Bible study would rule out the need to follow the above example.
 - 2) While it is true that there is an example here—though not approved by the apostles—when we apply good hermeneutics, we rule out the need to FOLLOW that example.
 - i. An important rule applicable here is: “Do not construe one passage so as to contradict other plain scriptures.”
 - ii. The Scriptures teach that when we sin we must repent and confess it.
 - iii. Judas merely set an example of what NOT to do when one is grieved over his sins.

Conclusion

- A. Our concern in studying Bible authority is to discuss matters that help to bring about the unity for which our Lord prayed (John 17:20, 21).
- B. “CENI,” far from being merely tradition, is precisely how God's will was determined in the first century.
 1. In studying the Bible, we must use it if we expect to understand and do what God wants us to do.

2. But if we do not also use good hermeneutics then it becomes worthless.
- C. Unity pleasing to God can be achieved only when we have proper respect for authority and when good hermeneutics are applied.

Credits for this chapter: Fellowship Room. Where Grace Abounds (Website). Hugh Fulford, Another Look at CENI – commands, examples and necessary inferences. Hugh's News & Views.

Review Questions for class # 4

1. Name four places professed Christians look to for authority.
2. What does the acronym CENI stand for?
3. What advantages and disadvantages are there for using the acronym?
4. Why do some not like “CENI”?
5. Discuss ways that some brethren seek to defeat “CENI”.
6. Brethren who oppose “CENI” argue that the New Testament is about love and that there are no commandments for us. What did Paul say that refutes the above?
8. What is a hermeneutic?
9. What is a biblical hermeneutic?
10. Why is it important to emphasize the need to use good hermeneutics?
11. Who gets to choose what hermeneutic to use?
12. Give an example of a BAD hermeneutic.
13. Give an example of a GOOD hermeneutic.
14. Jesus’ statements in the Beatitudes are not commands but more accurately are referred to as _____.
15. When Jesus spoke of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and said “God is not the God of the dead,” the Sadducees could Necessarily Imply, or infer, that those Patriarchs were _____.
16. What kind of example did Judas set by killing himself (Matt. 27:5)?
18. What hermeneutical rule should be applied to the example Judas set (and others like it) that might give one the idea that we should follow ALL examples if we are to follow any examples?

Bible Authority Class # 5

General and Specific Authority Use of Expediencies

Introduction

I. This lesson is about *general* and *specific* authority, but before getting into the lesson proper I wish first to say a few words about the need to respect authority and follow the word of God.

A. Understanding authority and respecting it is not exclusive to religion.

1. I want to read to you something that was written and published in the **Spiritual Sword**:

“Men are not divided over what the Bible says but what it doesn't say. Alexander Hamilton, (1st Sec. of Treasury) of USA proposed to establish a national bank in which the government was to be a major stockholder. Thomas Jefferson objected and Hamilton asked why. Jefferson said that the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, and it contains no provision for a national bank. Hamilton replied, There is nothing in the Constitution prohibiting the establishment of a national bank. The Constitution says not a single word about a national bank. There is no line that says: "Thou shalt not have the government engage in the banking business". These two ideas laid the foundation for two political parties: Republicans or Anti-federalists or "Strict constructionists" "Proposed being governed strictly by what was written, and declared there was danger in going beyond."

2. This is the approach conservative Christians use toward the Bible that leads to eternal life.

B. The Bible emphasizes the importance of having authority for what is done in religious practice.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; **teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. **17** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.**

1. To act without authority is to act *presumptuously*.

a. The word *presumptuous* is an adjective and is defined as “(of a person or their behavior) failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate.”

b. Synonyms: brazen, overconfident, arrogant, bold, audacious “When someone takes liberties, doing things too boldly, you can describe them with the adjective *presumptuous*.” (Vocabulary.com)

2. God associates *presumption* with **rebellion**.

Deut. 1:43 So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but **rebelled** against the commandment of the LORD, and went **presumptuously** up into the hill.

- C. We must not go beyond the Scriptures, for to do so is to act presumptuously.
1. Throughout the Scriptures, God emphasizes man's need to abide within His teachings.
 2. While the New Testament speaks of the “**liberty**” we have in Christ from **sin**, the Old Law, and the **traditions** of men, it is clear that we must not **add to nor take away** from the word of God.
 3. In the Old Testament, Moses forbade Israel from **adding to** or **taking away** from God's word.

Deut. 12:32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

- a. Likewise, in the New Testament we are taught to abide within the "*doctrine of Christ.*"

2 John 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

- b. In this lesson we will learn how to **define** and **scripturally apply** both *general* and *specific authority* and will examine several biblical examples that illustrate these two kinds of authority.

Body

I. The first-century church is a church for every century.

- A. In the days of the apostles there were no automobiles, trains, or airplanes to use as they went about preaching the gospel.
1. If we must not go beyond God's word, where does God give us authority to use the above forms of transportation since He never mentioned them in the Bible?
 2. Also, we do not read in the New Testament about Christians using song books or sitting in pews, so how can we say we have authority for those things?
 - a. Are we really being **silent** where God has been silent if we use such items or conveniences?
 - b. Many have not studied authority, and such questions are perplexing to them.
- B. The principles of **specific** and **generic** authority deal with these very questions.
1. In the Scriptures, God has been **specific** about many things.
 2. Where He is specific, we have no options but must do exactly as He teaches, whether the teaching is by command, example, or inference.
 3. In some areas, however, His commands are **generic**, leaving it up to us to determine the best way to fulfill those commands.
 4. **Generic** means "**general, opposite to specific**" (Webster's). "**Relating to or descriptive of an entire group or class**" (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language).

“Pertaining to, affecting, or applicable to, each and all of a class, kind, or order; as a general law. Not limited to a precise import or application; not specific.” (Webster)

5. “Specific,” on the other hand, is defined as “precisely formulated or restricted; specifying or explicit” (Webster).
- C. In a previous lesson we learned that the Bible authorizes, directs, or teaches us through *precept* (commands or direct statements), *approved examples*, and *necessary implications* or inferences.
1. We learned that if we have one or more of these for what we believe, teach, and practice, we, therefore, have divine authority for it.
 2. Now we must learn that:

II. Bible authority is of two kinds or comes within two realms.

- A. It either comes within:
1. The realm of *generic* (general) authority, or
 2. The realm of *specific* authority.
- B. A distinction must be made between **general** authority and **specific** authority if we are to understand and properly apply Bible authority.
1. Failing to recognize and apply this, many reject certain practices that are authorized, such as: a baptistery, Bible class literature, separate Bible classes, individual communion cups, church owned meeting house, projectors, etc.
 2. On the other hand, failing to understand *general* and *specific* authority, some say, “**If it is not specifically forbidden, it is allowed,**” which is the same reasoning as that of Hamilton, who contended for a national bank.
 - a. These seek to justify such things as: mechanical instruments of music in worship, eating the Lord’s Supper on Thursday night, collection taken at any or all services any day of the week, etc.
 - b. People decide it is okay to do these things, but in doing them, they go beyond the Scriptures, displease God, and make unity impossible.
- C. A little later I want us to look together at several examples, both in the Old and New Testaments, where *general* and *specific* authority are illustrated.
1. But first, I want to deal briefly with *expediencies*.
 2. We will then resume discussion of general and specific commands.

III. Expediencies

- A. **Definition:** A useful, valuable, suitable or practical means of accomplishing a task or goal.

- B. Expediencies are employed in the use of general commands, or aid in carrying out the command.
1. We need to be careful that we do not confuse *expediency* with **authority**.
 2. We should first determine a thing to be *lawful*; then we may consider what we judge to be *expedient* as we endeavor to carry out what is authorized.
 3. If a proposed practice is not lawful, then expediency should not come into play.
- C. Old Testament examples.
1. God's command to Noah to build the ark perfectly illustrates the use of both **specific** and **generic** authority (Gen. 6:14-21).
 - a. Noah was commanded to build the ark out of *gopher* wood.
 - 1) There were many kinds of wood from which Noah could have built the ark, but God specified the type of wood for him to use.
 - 2) But had God said only, "**Make an ark out of wood**," the command would have been **generic**, allowing Noah to choose from the kinds of wood available.
 - b. Noah proved himself to be a man of faith by obeying.
 - c. God was specific about other aspects of the building of the ark.
 - 1) The size, dimensions, and number of levels and openings were specified.
 - 2) Again, Noah proved himself a man of faith by obeying.
 - d. However, there were some commands related to the building of the ark that were **generic**, which meant Noah could **choose** from the options available to him.
 - 1) God commanded Noah to "*Make for yourself an ark.*"
 - 2) Since this is a **generic** command, Noah had the authority to use whatever tools he felt were suitable for the job that would enable him to accomplish the task.
 - i. The tools would fall into the category of *expediency*.
 - ii. They were expedient.
 2. The Passover Lamb (Ex. 12:5) had to be "unblemished," yet the command left room for some judgment in choosing from among the lambs that fit that description.
 - a. "A male" excludes a female.
 - b. Thus, to have selected a female would have been to disobey the command.
 3. The use of generic and specific authority can be seen in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk 16:15).
 - a. Jesus told a certain group of people to fulfill a certain task.
 - b. He was **specific** on some points, but **generic** on other points.
 - 1) Specifically, Christians (disciples of Christ) were the ones who were to **go**.
 - 2) Also, their commission was **specific** in that they were to make "*disciples of all nations.*"
 - 3) Jesus was also specific as to **how** they were to go about making disciples.
 - i. He said to **preach** or **teach** them.

“go”

- ii. He also specified "*baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*" in the conversion process.
 - c. Regarding these points, since Jesus was specific, Christians have no authority to do anything other than what Jesus said.
 - 1) To seek to make disciples by having hearers put their hands on their TV or the radio, or to sprinkle them with water, would be to disobey the command.
 - 2) Disciples cannot be made by preaching the words of men.
 - i. Only by preaching the gospel and baptizing can true disciples be made.
 - ii. One doesn't get further away from God's command regarding making converts than do Muslims (Islamists) who make converts through fear of death.
 - d. Some elements of this command Jesus left **generic**.
 - 1) He said to "go" but never specified HOW they would go.
 - 2) In the first century, Christians walked, rode in chariots and on horses, and traveled on boats.
 - 3) By the same authority that Christians used for these means of travel, we have the authority to "go" in our cars, on trains, or in airplanes, because is a generic command.
- 4. Naaman the Leper (2 Kings 5:9-19) was a commander in the Assyrian army in the days of Elisha the prophet.
 - a. He had leprosy and wanted Elisha to heal him.
 - b. Elisha directed Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River.
 - 1) Naaman became furious when he heard the command because he was expecting the prophet to do something great.
 - 2) He also thought that the prophet could have chosen one of the great rivers such as the Abanah, the Pharpar, or the rivers of Damascus.
 - 3) Though Naaman was angry at first, his servant convinced him to heed the words of Elisha, which he did and he was healed.
 - c. In Elisha's command to Naaman, some **specific** directives had to be followed.
 - 1) Not only was the river specified that Naaman was to dip in but the number of dips was also specified.
 - 2) The text says, "*So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean*" (2 Kings 5:14).
 - i. Had Naaman dipped himself any number short of seven times he would not have been healed.
 - ii. Since Elisha specified **seven** dips, it was not until after the **seventh** dip that Naaman was healed.
 - 3) Again, we see the importance of respecting God's **specific** commands.
 - d. Naaman had **generic** authority to choose any location on the Jordan that he wanted, but concerning these other points, he had no options but to do exactly as he was commanded.

D. New Testament examples.

1. We have the authority to **assemble** as a church (Heb. 10:25), and using a meeting house is an expedient in fulfilling the command to assemble.
 - a. It is expedient to **cool** and **heat** the meeting house.
 - b. It is expedient that we install lights so we can see to read.
 - c. It is expedient to have seats or pews to sit.
2. We have authority in the church to **teach** (Eph. 4:11).
 - a. Dividing up into Bible classes, according to age or knowledge, is expedient in fulfilling the command to teach.
 - b. Using chalkboards, projectors, workbooks, etc., is also expedient.
3. **Giving** is authorized in 1 Cor. 16:1-2, and using **collection baskets** to gather the funds during worship is an expedient.
4. **Baptism** is commanded in Acts 2:38, and it is expedient to have a baptistery readily available when needed.
5. **Singing** is commanded in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16, and using songbooks is an expedient.

IV. Applying specific and generic authority today.

- A. In areas where God is **specific**, there is no choice or options.
 1. We must fulfill His commands exactly as they were given.
 2. By having left some commands **generic** God's word applies to every person in every generation and culture.
 - a. And it is just as effective today as it ever was.
 - b. Thus, the Bible can never become outdated.
- B. Regarding certain items in our worship, God is specific, and the type of MUSIC is a great example.
 1. In **Eph. 5:19** and **Col. 3:16**, God specifically commanded Christians to "*sing*" and to "*make melody in your hearts.*"
 - a. This is the only kind of music God authorized in the New Testament.
 - b. Just as different specific kinds of wood fall under the **generic** type of **wood**, so there are different kinds of **music** that fall under the **generic** type of **music**.
 2. We have commands, examples, and necessary inferences that indicate only singing is authorized and is to be practiced by the New Testament church.
 - a. Since God is specific on this point, we have no authority to use any other kind of music.
 - b. Instrumental music is not authorized, because it goes beyond the specific command of God.
 - c. However, God did not specify **where** we must get the music that we sing.
 - 1) This means we have a choice of singing by memory, using songbooks, or

- using an overhead projection.
- 2) Congregations generally use songbooks or overhead projection so that everyone can sing the same words at the same time and know what he/she is singing.
 - i. These are authorized because they do not add to God's commands and they aid us in fulfilling the specific command to sing.
 - ii. By this same authority, we are able to use trays to serve the Lord's Supper.
 3. If the New Testament had given generic instructions to **produce music** in worship, the principle of generic authority would allow **either** or **both** kinds of music.
 - a. But since singing was specified, we have a parallel to the specification of gopher wood for the ark, and unleavened bread and fruit of the vine for the Lord's Supper—things that specific authority requires.
 - b. Instrumental music is not specified and is, therefore, parallel to the use of pine for the ark, or leavened bread for the Lord's Supper.
- C. To worship God in truth, Christians must assemble, but God did not specify **where** they are to assemble.
1. In the New Testament, we read of Christians assembling in people's houses (Rom. 16:5), in upper rooms (Acts 20:7, 8), and in the **temple** in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46).
 2. Today, many congregations provide a **location** by purchasing or renting a meeting place.
 - a. We have authority for this because God was not specific on this point.
 - b. He commanded us to assemble (Heb. 10:25), and He was specific concerning what we are to do when we assemble; but He left it to the leadership's judgment to determine what is most expedient regarding whether to worship in homes, rent, or buy.
- D. Most commands in the Bible have BOTH *general* and *specific* components.
1. The former is generally understood, and few problems occur from misunderstandings.
 2. To keep from transgressing God's word, we must pay close attention to God's *specific* commands and limit what we do accordingly.
- E. A proper understanding of how God uses **specific** and **generic** commands to express His will can answer many questions concerning why we do what we do as the Lord's church, and why we should **not** do some things that various churches practice.
- F. If these principles are used, the wisdom of God, in providing a revelation that is applicable to every generation, becomes apparent.

Conclusion

- A. Let us continually pursue a proper understanding of the authority of the Scriptures.
- B. In so doing we will have a better appreciation for God's revealed word, and we will prove ourselves workmen who do not need to be ashamed, because we will be able to handle God's word in the right way (2 Tim. 2:15).

Credits for this chapter: Sunday Sermons, Generic and Specific Authority, Mark Dunagan. Taylors Church of Christ (Website). The Validity of Expediency, Bill Moseley.

Bible Authority Class Review Questions # 5

1. Understanding authority and respecting it is exclusive to religion. True or False
2. Who were the two founding fathers who argued regarding authority as to whether the government could establish a national bank?
3. Which man sought to justify the national bank because the Constitution did not say not to have one?
4. What passages contain the phrase “**whatsoever ye do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord**”?
5. What does “**in the name of**” mean?
6. To act without authority is to act _____.
7. Define presumptuous and name some synonyms.

8. God associates assumption with _____ in Deut. 1:43.
9. In Deut. 12:32, Moses forbade Israel from _____ to or _____ from God’s word.
10. What New Testament passage teaches the same as the above text?
11. Why is it not accurate to assert that we have no authority to drive a car or fly in an airplane as we “**go into all the world**” to preach?

12. Where God is _____ we have no option, but must do exactly as commanded.
13. Where God has given a _____ command we have options or the authority to choose how best to carry out the command?

14. Explain what is meant by the term “generic”.
15. Explain what is meant by the term “specific”.

16. Name some things that some churches reject because of failure to understand and apply general and specific authority.

17. Which of the following best applies to those who reject a practice with general authority: 1) Too conservative; or 2) Too liberal.
18. Which of the following best applies to those who practice things for which there is neither general nor specific authority? 1) Too conservative; or 2) Too liberal.
19. Discuss why the comment, “If the Bible does not say we can’t...” used to justify something in religion is not a sound argument for church action.

20. When there is a question among disciples seeking to worship together as to how often to take the Lord's Supper, how can this be worked out where there can be unity and all can know they are pleasing God?
21. What is an *expedient* or *expediency*?
22. Before a thing can be determined to be *expediency* it must first be determined to be which of the following: 1) In conformity with tradition; 2) It must be lawful.
23. The use of a meeting house is an expedient in fulfilling the command to _____.
24. From what passage do we find authority to assemble? _____
25. From what passage do we get authority to teach? _____
26. Dividing into classes is an _____ used to fulfill the command to teach.
27. *Giving* is authorized in I Cor 16:1-2. What item do we use to aid in gathering the collection during worship that would fall into the category of an expedient? _____
28. What type of wood was Noah authorized to use in building the Ark?
29. Explain why it would have been an unauthorized act to use some other kind of wood even if thought to be expedient (being more readily available and soft and easy to work)?
30. What did Jesus specify regarding HOW to make disciples?
31. Give an example of where one religion seeks to make followers of God but does so contrary to how Jesus taught that it must be done.
32. What type of authority was used in the command to the disciples to "go"?
33. Explain why we have authority to ride a bike, a car, or fly in an airplane when we go preach.
34. List some specific commands Naaman had to follow to be healed of leprosy.
35. What command was of a general nature that allowed Naaman a choice?
35. What examples can you give of people not understanding generic and specific authority that is applicable today?
36. Is **singing** a *generic* or *specific* command?
37. Why is instrumental music not an expedient?
38. Explain why the parts of singing (base, alto etc.) are authorized.
39. Name some places where disciples assembled for worship.
40. Explain why a local church has authority to own a building in which to worship.

Bible Authority Class # 6

“Patternism”

Introduction

- A. In previous lessons, we discussed how to establish Christ's authority.
 - 1. God teaches us using *direct commands* (declaratives), *approved examples*, and *necessary inferences*.
 - 2. Also, we have studied the two kinds of authority: **generic** and **specific**.
 - a. We have looked at examples from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
 - b. We have discussed the fact that failure to understand and apply these types of commands can result in:
 - 1) Rejecting certain practices that are authorized;
 - 2) Taking the position that “If it is not specifically forbidden, it is allowed,” which is the other extreme.
 - c. We noted that an acronym, CENI, has been invented, which is unfortunate.
 - 1) First, people read the acronym and wonder what it is.
 - 2) Second, while at first it might have been used just to save space in writing, it has come to be used as a SYSTEM that makes it appear to be something it is not.
 - i. It is a way of establishing authority that is used in all areas of authority.
 - ii. We use it to learn what God wants us to do in religion.
 - d. We noted that “CENI” is not a hermeneutic but merely something to which Hermeneutics must be applied, so that it can be misused and will not work unless we apply good hermeneutics.
- B. We also looked at “*expediencies*.”
 - 1. An *expedient* is an aid or means and methods of carrying out the will of God.
 - 2. We noted that one must first determine an action or behavior to be lawful and then expediency may begin to be considered.
- C. A study of authority would not be complete if we did not talk about biblical patterns—commonly referred to as *patternism*.

Body

- I. **First, the idea that there are *patternists* who espouse “*patternism*” suggests the idea of a legalistic system or dogma, which it is not. Such labels as this, like CENI, are unfair and can be used prejudicially. For example: “He is a *patternist*.”**
 - A. One is not called a *beano* because he eats beans, nor would it make sense to

refer to the practice of eating beans as *beanism*.

1. Neither should the idea of using biblical patterns be referred to as *patternism*.
2. The words *patternist* and *patternism* help objectors to make it out to be something it is not.

B. Definition of "pattern":

1. The term "**pattern**" means "*an example, pattern the pattern placed before one to be held fast and copied, model*" (Thayer, 645).
2. *A form or model proposed for imitation : exemplar. something designed or used as a model for making things "a dressmaker's pattern"* (Merriam Webster).

C. A biblical pattern is simply what God has said on a matter. For example:

1. The sum of New Testament teaching regarding what one must do to be saved is the pattern we must follow.
2. The sum of what the New Testament teaches pertaining to worship in the assemblies is the pattern for worship.

D. Patterns are developed through study of:

1. Commands and declaratives.
2. Examples of what the New Testament church did that were approved by the apostles; and
3. Conclusions reached that are necessary or inferred.

II. While this may seem to be fundamental and not even debatable, let me assure you that some object to the idea that the Bible has patterns for us to follow.

A. Some deny there is a New Testament pattern for the church and even deny there is any pattern at all, other than Jesus for the individual.

1. Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris wrote:

“For the individual believer, Christ's perfect example remains the benchmark for his or her life. For the corporate body of Christ, there is no historical prototype of the church for duplication. The kingdom of God is yet to come in its ultimate form” (Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris, *The Second Incarnation*).

2. David Lipscomb, President of Lipscomb University, wrote a tract called “**Where There Is No Pattern.**”

- a. It set the stage for the idea that a church can do whatever it wants to do—that the Scriptures do not restrict it.
- b. Many churches of Christ, since the writing of that tract, have become more liberal than some denominations.

B. Many in the church today contend that we don't have to follow examples, i.e., patterns set forth in the New Testament.

1. They are not “binding,” they say.

2. They exclude the necessity to learn from, use, apply, and follow anything other than the example Christ set about how individuals are to live.
 - a. Well, no individual can EVER follow Christ's example perfectly—no matter how hard he tries.
 - b. But a local church can follow the patterns outlined in the New Testament that teach the church what God wants it to do.
 - 1) Those who contend that there is no pattern are left feeling that there is no real direction.
 - 2) The likes of which Paul accurately described when he said, "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

III. Every professed Bible believer recognizes that Jesus set an example that Christians should seek to follow, but there are other examples (patterns) that set forth God's teaching throughout the Bible.

- A. The apostle Paul set an example and gave commands.
 1. **Phi. 4:9** *The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*
 - a. The above is a pattern.
 - b. It is also a command with promise.
 2. **1 Cor. 11:1-2** *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.*
 3. **2 Tim. 1:13** (ASV) *Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*
 4. **Rom. 6:17** (ASV) *But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered;*
Thayer defines the word "form" as, 4) an example 4a) in the technical sense, the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made 4b) in an ethical sense, a dissuasive example, a pattern of warning 4c) an example to be imitated.
 5. **Phil. 3:17** *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*
 6. **2 Thess. 3:9** *Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.*
- B. Old Testament Teaching Pertaining to Patterns.
 1. **1 Cor. 10:5** *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur*

ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

2. We see in Gen. 6:14-16, 22 that God gave Noah a pattern for the ark, and that Noah followed it as commanded.
3. The Lord delivered to Moses a divine pattern for the tabernacle that he was to follow in every detail (Ex. 25:8-9, 40).

Heb. 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

4. We see in 1 Chronicles. 28:10-12, 19-20 that Solomon followed a pattern for the temple.

IV. We have a responsibility to follow patterns.

- A. The apostle commands us, "**Hold fast the pattern of sound words**" (2 Tim. 1:13).
 1. We must endeavor to follow the New Testament pattern on every biblical subject.
 2. Closely related is the command to *imitate*—not just Christ, but Paul—a mission that would be impossible if we reject the idea of patterns given to us through commands, examples, and inferences.
 3. *Mimeiteis* is the Greek word that is translated *imitate*, and per the **Merriam-Webster Dictionary**, to *imitate* is "**to follow as a pattern, model, or example.**"
- B. Jeremiah exhorted God's people to fulfill their responsibility to hear again God's ways and to follow them, but they refused.

Jer. 6:16 Thus says the Lord: "Stand in the ways and see. And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."

 1. Refusal to follow God's patterns, His ways, and His statutes resulted in their receiving severe punishment.
 2. Rather than having a death grip on **customs** and **traditions**, churches should "**ask for the old paths**" with a determination to "**walk therein.**"
 - a. Many need to return to the Bible and **let the church be the church.**
 - b. The church Jesus married and gave his life for is **glorious, unique, and powerful.**
 - 1) It is non-denominational in its organization, mission, and work.
 - 2) There are congregations worldwide that are organized per God's pattern and are independent and autonomous, which means they do their own work.
 - 3) Brethren need to let the church be the church—saved people involved in the work of saving souls, worshipping God, and preparing for judgment and heaven.

V. Following biblical patterns is not evil, as its detractors have labeled it.

- A. This is not to say that its proponents have always been right in their application.
- B. There are two possible serious problems related to the use of patterns.
 - 1. Failure to use good hermeneutics can result in error.
 - 2. Looking upon “CENI” and patterns as a legalistic system that requires perfect obedience and de-emphasizes grace and mercy will result in continual conflict and division.
 - a. Perhaps some of the blame for the division and resulting apostasy that started in the '50s and '60s was due to attitudes that would not allow fellowship where there was not complete agreement on issues.
 - 1) John’s teachings (2 John 1:9-11) have often been interpreted in the most destructive way, resulting in the idea that if Christians have any fellowship with a church, or fellow member, that they believe to be in error on something, they thus “**bid him godspeed**” and “**have not God.**”
 - 2) The above is not a hermeneutically sound exegesis of the text, and it has unfortunately contributed greatly to disunity among all disciples of Christ.
 - b. While it is true that God commands churches to “**all speak the same thing,**” that there be “**no divisions,**” that they “**be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment**” (1 Cor. 1:10), and “**walk by the same rule**” (Phi. 3:16), this is an ideal.
 - 1) It is neither scriptural nor practical for churches to dissociate themselves with and have nothing to do with other churches on the basis of disagreement on ONE issue, especially an issue not related to the plan of salvation.
 - 2) God looks at **attitudes** and **hearts** in making judgment; thus as long as people are willing to be cordial and study the Bible together there should never be disunity among brethren.

Conclusion

- A. God has always used patterns to teach and work with His people.
 - 1. The concept is not new nor is it an idea that anyone invented.
 - 2. Back in 1988, Reuel Lemmons had some great things to say about “patternism”:

“Restoration assumes patternism. If there is no pattern to lose, there is none to restore. The very validity of the Restoration principle rests upon the preclusion that God wanted certain things certain ways, and men have ignored what God wanted. What is it that we are going to restore? Is it not the restoring of doing Bible things in Bible ways? It seems to me that if this principle is ignored, then we have no real reason for trying to restore anything.

“...Is God a God who deals in patterns? He did with Noah. He did with Moses in the building of the tabernacle. Unless he changes his nature he still deals in patterns with us. His patterns must be respected.

“We must go to pattern theology for our very concept of the church... Everything we read in the Scriptures enforces the pattern concept...

“If we assume such a thing as pattern theology, or even admit to the existence of patterns, we are forced to accept limitations, for patterns limit. They restrict to both right and left. This forces us to accept God’s authority in areas of silence as well as in areas of revelation.” Reuel Lemmons, *-One Body*, Summer 1988, page 4.

- B. Historically, God’s people have tended to be more like their religious neighbors that often fail to “**hold to the pattern of sound words**” (2 Tim. 1:12) and lose their distinctiveness that God expects (Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9).
- C. Those who abandon the New Testament pattern(s) for their own ways are disobedient and demonstrate a lack of faith in and love for Jesus Christ.
 - 1. **Faith comes by hearing...the word of God** (Rom. 10:17).
 - 2. Failure to hear God—who speaks through *commands* (declaratives), *examples*, and *inferences*—and refusal to acknowledge and follow biblical *patterns*, demonstrates a lack of faith.
 - 3. God is all-wise and all-knowing, but “**the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps**” (Jer. 10:23).
 - a. Rather than rely upon our own judgment, or what “**seemeth right**” (Prov. 16:25), it is essential that we prove our faith by looking to God’s word for direction in our lives and in our worship (2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4).
 - b. Any time we are tempted to step outside the bounds of morality or to begin some proposed practice collectively in the church, Paul’s command, with promise, should always be considered:

Phi. 4:9 The things which you **learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do:** and the God of peace shall be with you.

Credits for this chapter: Bible Answers (Website), Joe Price.

Bible Authority --Study Questions for Lesson # 7

1. What are the three ways of establishing authority?
2. Name the two kinds of authority.
3. How does Thayer define the word *pattern*?
4. How does Mariam Webster define *pattern*?
5. Define *biblical pattern* in your own words.
6. How are *biblical patterns* developed?
7. Can an individual follow Jesus' example perfectly?
8. Can a church follow the New Testament Pattern for worship exactly as it teaches?
9. If there is no pattern for the church how are members left to feel?
10. How did Paul (Eph. 4) describe those who do not get direction from God's word?
11. Cite the passage where Paul proclaims himself to be an example in which he gives a command with promise?

[Fill in the blank with the passage reference (questions 12-14; 16-18)]

12. **"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ".** _____
13. Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me... _____
14. **"...Ye became obedient from the heart to that **form** of teaching whereunto ye were delivered."** _____
15. How does Thayer define the word "*form*" in the above text?
16. **"Ye have us for an example"** _____
17. **"...make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."** _____
18. **"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition..."** _____
19. What did God gave Noah to use in building the ark? _____
20. Who wrote the following passage and cite the text: **"...For, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."**

22. Solomon followed the pattern for the _____.
23. Cite the scripture reference where the following is found: **Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**
24. Define the word "*imitate*".

25. What did Jeramiah command God’s people to do and what was their response?
26. The application to Jeramiah’s command today is that churches should ask for the “ _____ ” with a determination to “ _____ ”.
27. Name two possible problems related to following or using patterns in the Bible.
28. How can misinterpreting and misapplying 1 John 1:9-11 be harmful to unity among churches and individuals?
29. Since God looks at **attitudes** and **hearts** in making judgment, should we treat people with whom we differ as an apostate?
30. How does faith come to an individual? Cite the passage.
31. Since God speaks through commands, examples and inferences, and teaches though patterns, what should be our attitude toward these things?
32. God is all-wise and all-knowing, but the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to _____. (Fill in the blanks and cite the passage.)
33. Rather than rely upon our own judgment, or what _____ (Prov. 16:25), it is imperative that we prove our faith by looking to God’s word for direction in our lives and in our worship (2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4).

