

Establishing and Applying Biblical Authority: *Discussion One*

I. Reviewing Foundations:

A. As we began this study we started with a very basic question: “Is it a Biblical concept that we should feel the need to seek out authority for what we do?”

1. We’ve spent our past two lessons discussing this question, and to answer it we looked primarily at two examples: First, what did Jesus think; second, what did the Apostles and New Testament writers (specifically Paul) have to say.

a) In looking to Jesus for an example we found in passages like **John 12:49** that He claimed not to speak of His own initiative, but only the words that His Father told Him to Speak. We saw in **Matthew 28:18**, that in commanding the disciples to go out on their mission of evangelism, He had the right to do so because He had all authority:

b) In looking at what Paul wrote to men like Timothy, we saw the repeated admonitions to guard, defend and remain true to the doctrine that Paul had handed down to him, not on the basis of their worth coming from Paul, but because they came from Jesus. (**Galatians 1:11-20**)

B. As we concluded last week, when we took all of this information together we saw a direct line being established:

1. We accept the Apostles teaching because Jesus was their source of Authority:
2. We accept what Jesus taught because He was given Authority by the Father:
3. We accept the Authority of God because He is the creator of all, and as such is the ruler of all.

a) Any attempt to break away from this, or to disregard the need for authority as out of date, is to place one’s self above Jesus and the Apostles:

C. But that still leaves us with the question of “how do we go about deciding what tasks God has given us the authority to be about?”

II. Defining Authority:

A. There a few steps that we need to take before we can give the specifics of that question’s answer:

1. It would help to have a more detailed definition of what exactly we mean when we say that we want to “establish authority”. Let us follow this line of reasoning:
 - a) Broadly speaking, **what is my goal** in life to be? To paraphrase from **Ecc. 12:13**, the whole purpose of my life should be trying to please God: Whether as an individual going about my own affairs, or with a group of individuals working together, as in the Church.
 - b) If my goal is to please God, then the question that I must ask is how do I **accomplish this**? Reason will tell me that I can only be sure that I’m pleasing someone if they’ve communicated to me what exactly it is that they want:
 - c) So **where** can I go to find out what God wants me to do? **Hebrews 1:2** states that God has in these last days, spoken to us through His son, and those Words are recorded in the Gospels and in the writings of the Apostles: **2 Peter 1:3** tells that God has revealed all things pertaining to life and godliness, while **2 Timothy 3:16** makes the claim that the scriptures are the inspired Word of God. So if I want to be absolutely sure that I’m looking in the write place for what God has to say, **the Bible** is the only book in existence that has proven itself to be a reliable source:
 - d) **Finally**, what do I do with this resource? How is it that I go about extracting that information and putting it into practice?
2. In this regard, one way to define “establishing authority” is the *Pursuit of what God wants me to do, and the knowledge of how to put it into practice:*

B. Why is it important to take these steps? (*Illus. of a Math Problem*)

1. We need to be able to show our work: It is important to have the answers; but if you only have the answer because someone gave it to you, then your knowledge is incomplete:
2. Think about these examples:
 - a) Why do we partake of the Lord’s Supper: *A: 1 Corinthians 11 and Matt. 26* we find the command to break unleavened bread and eat the fruit of the vine:
 - (i) This would be a *technically correct* answer, but if it is separated from the broader context of the Lord’s death and the meaning of that sacrifice, then there isn’t a true knowledge of why we are taking of the Lord’s Supper

- b) Why do we take up the collection? *A:* In **1 Corinthians 16** we have an example of the churches taking of a collection:
- (i) Again, this would be *technically correct*. but if it is removed from the context of why they took up a collection and what they did with it, then it isn't a working knowledge.
3. This is just as true with the subject of Authority: It is not enough to hand down the answers of "command, example, inference" if they are not being taught as principles that are built on a foundation of why we need authority, and then continued to be taught in the context of how they are applied:
- a) Our goal should be that we can thoroughly explain to others of why these principles are important, and more importantly, that we can explain it to ourselves.
- b) Many who are questioning/rejecting authority are not people who have never been taught the words "command, example, and inference". They are (many) honest people who know these answers, and are still moving away from the need for authority.
- (i) From what I can tell, for many it is because although they learned the answers, they never learned how to show their work: The answers were earned by someone else's efforts.

III. Examples of Establishing Authority

- A. In essence, there are only three ways that I can communicate something to anyone:
1. I can tell them, I can show them, Or I can give them enough information to draw a logical conclusion:
 2. In taking those three basic principles and applying them to scripture, we most often say that we can Establish authority by finding a **Command**, an **Example**, or by drawing a necessary **Inference**
 3. Even if you don't frequently use these exact terms, you've more than likely used them regardless of what you call them:
 - a) You might *infer* that working as a bartender is not employment that a Christian should seek out

- b) You might make extra opportunities to study in your home because you find early Christians doing the same thing
- 4. Whatever you want to call them, and even if you are or are not aware that you communicate this way, the most important matter is that they are all *biblical principles*
 - a) As we did in our first lesson, I want to begin by asking, How did Jesus Establish Authority? (***A word on Commands***)

B.. Consider His discussion on Marriage Matt. 19:1-6

- 1. When asked about God's intentions for Marriage, where does quote from in verse 6? His answer is not found in any other place in scripture! Did He suddenly begin disregarding the Law? What about His claim to only speak what God told Him to speak?
 - a) Jesus begins by citing from the opening chapters in Genesis: (1:27, 5:2, and 2:24)
 - b) From those passages, He took the principles of God joining a man and a woman together as one, and He drew out the inference that it was a relationship no man had a right to end

C. Consider the Resurrection: Matt. 22:23-32

- 1. The Saducees truly thought that they'd created a question that would win them two victories: It would stump Jesus because it was impossible to answer, and in their minds it would also disprove the resurrection:
 - a) When Jesus answers, He quotes from Exodus 3:6, a passage that mentions absolutely nothing about the resurrection: But He points to God referring to Himself as *currently* being the God of men who were long dead as sufficient information to allow the reader to conclude that those men continued on living in a spiritual form:
 - (1)As with the need for authority, Jesus not only did this Himself, but it is what He expected from others as well

D. Examples from the Apostles:

- 1. Paul used both inferences and examples in his teachings:

- a) In **Romans 1:20-21** he declared that God's condemnation of the Gentiles was just on the basis that they should be able to infer God's existence from the creation they saw around them:
- (1) When Paul was in Thessalonica he led the Jews there to a belief in Jesus as the Christ through inferences: In Acts 17:1-4, He inferred that since Jesus fulfilled what the Christ was said to do, He must be the Christ*
- b) The Gospel was preached to the Gentiles through Inference and Examples:
- (1) Peter's inference from His own vision, and the information from Cornelius was that He was now to preach to the Gentiles
- (2) The example of Peter preaching was used to prove that the Gentiles didn't need to be circumcised to be part of the body of Christ in Acts 15:
2. We could continue with a list of writers making inferences from other scriptures, and urging others to follow on in the examples that they set; But the point is very basic-- The way that we seek to establish authority today is exactly what Jesus and the Apostles did:

IV. Current Challenges:

- A. The growing trend is to try and disregard some or all of these methods:
1. Many will point out that you don't find the terms CENI in the New Testament, and many more will get out different books written by various religious minded men and find a date to point to when these terms first began heavy circulation in an attempt to find an "a ha!" moment:
 2. This is very faulty logic: The date that you began to call something by a particular name, is not the same date that something came into existence: Think of all of the discoveries that have been made and have yet to be made: Do we say that these didn't exist until we paid attention to them and gave them names?
 3. These are the basic principles of communication-- they have *always* existed: The fact that some men relatively recently sought to define them in an attempt to call attention to biblical principles they saw as being neglected has nothing to do with their conception:

4. The challenge would be to communicate a piece of information without directly telling, showing, or giving enough information to draw a conclusion:

Conclusion:

- Our means of establishing authority is simple: But that doesn't mean there are no more questions to ask:
 - The concept of a command is fairly simple: But was it given to me? How long does it apply?
 - What about Examples? Are they all binding-- do they show what we must do or what we can do?
 - These are some of the issues that we will explore in our next lesson.