

Establishing and Applying Biblical Authority: *Lesson 2*

Knowing When Scripture Applies

Review:

- i.** As we've been discussing issues of Authority, our goal has been to come away from this with a working knowledge; how to explain these concepts to others as well as feel sure of them ourselves: There are certain foundational principles that we've established so far:
 - a.** First and foremost, we've seen that the idea that we should seek out Authority from God for our actions, whether as a group or as individuals, is indeed a Biblical principle. It was the attitude of Jesus and His followers and must be ours as well.
 - b.** Second, the approach that we are most familiar with in accomplishing this, (looking for a command, an example, or an inference), is not only the same way that Authority was established in scripture, but are simply names given to the basic forms that we all communicate through.
 - c.** The challenge that we are left with is knowing how to apply this information:

I. Knowing how to use the information gleaned with these principles of communication involves being able to accurately interpret what a passage says:

- A. This involves several steps, but the first is placing any text in its proper context:
 1. When I approach a passage for study I need to know exactly what kind of ***literature*** I'm looking at: We refer to the Bible as one book, but we also know it is made up of 66 individual books. And each of these is spread across a wide range of literature types.
 2. Am I reading a **historical narrative** such as in the book of Acts or Kings and Chronicles? If so, in what way will that affect my approach to the text?
 3. Perhaps I'm reading something that was written down as **poetry**, such as Psalms and Proverbs. I'll need to be aware that there is a great deal of figurative language employed in the writing of these texts.
 4. Or maybe I'm reading some **communication** between individuals such as Paul's letters to Timothy. Are there areas of that individual's situation that still apply to

me? Or perhaps they are in a situation that I won't be in, but I can still take away some principles to apply:

B. These are the first steps that must be taken to have an awareness of the passage I'm studying: But in addition to this, I must know that I cannot read any passage in a vacuum; I need to study it in its historical setting: In other words; what was going on when this passage was written?

1. Do you remember the basic information gathering questions that were taught in grade school? "The 5 W's". Perhaps these are second nature to many; but for many more it seems that these have fallen by the wayside in studying scripture:

a) Who? What? When? Where? Why? Imagine all of the information that students could glean if they truly made a list of questions from these 5 W's to employ in their study:

(1) Who wrote it? Who did they write it to? Who all did they expect to read it?

(2) What did they write about? What did they emphasize? What was going on around them when they wrote?

(3) When exactly did they write it?

(4) Where did they write it from? Where was it sent?

C. It is after we ask all of these questions, and perhaps others, that we can begin to ask; what does the text mean, and in what way does it apply to our circumstances?

1. Isn't this too complicated? This sounds like we are trying to make reading the Bible an extremely labor intensive task;

a) This is nothing special. This isn't an exclusive scientific formula that only the top 1% of scholars choose to practice: All we are advocating is that if we want to understand the text and its implications for us, then we will approach the Bible the exact same way that we would approach any other subject that we truly want to understand: *(Does any highschool or college teacher assign a book and simply say "read it"? Do they not spend time discussing all of these questions we've mentioned so that they book can be properly understood?)*

2. The point that we are making is this: Looking for commands, examples, and drawing inferences is the starting line for Authority. If we are going

to understand what those they mean then we must put forth time and effort into interpreting the scriptures.

- a) What we will do with the rest of our discussion is take a little time and show how the principles we've discussed this morning work with those that we covered in our last lesson:

II. Interpretation as it applies to *Commands*

A. Something stated in our previous study was that command are more often than not the most straightforward part of establishing Authority. While I'd still say that by and large that is true, I still need to be able to show why those commands, no matter how straightforward, apply to you and me:

- i. Consider these fairly easy to interpret commands:

a) John 15:17: "*Love One Another*"

- (i) There is nothing overly complex about this, and I doubt that anyone would argue that this applies to us: But lets prove that:

- (a) The who in this situation is Jesus and the Disciples. The When and Where is the final week of Jesus ministry while they were located in Jerusalem, having observed the passover feast. This was the night that Jesus would be betrayed, and before they left for the Garden, Jesus was giving some last instructions to His disciples about how their relationship to the world and to each other. This is was a command given to the disciples, and as obvious as it seems that this would apply to us, it doesn't directly mention anyone other than the disciples minus Judas:

- (b) What I can observe though, is that if I want to be a disciple of Jesus, I will obey the commands that He gave those who were His disciples.

- i) I can point out that in the great commission when Jesus told His followers to go out and make disciples, He says in **Matt. 28:20** that they were to teach them to observe all things that He commanded them:

ii) Would that include this command? Paul, Peter, and John all seemed to think so:

(1) Paul in **Romans 12:10** Love one another with brotherly affection

(2) Peter in **1 Peter 4:8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly

(3) **1 John 4:11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another:

b) **You can think** of other straightforward commands:

(1) **Luke 13:5** Jesus says that unless you repent that you will perish: Using the same principles above, that this applied to any who wished to be Jesus' disciple, and again seeing this taught by those Apostles who went out to make disciples, I can safely say that this command applies to me:

2. **These are very elementary** principles. And yet they must be put into use, because sometimes there are commands that do not apply to us:

a) Here are a couple of obvious examples to make the point:

(1) In **Mark 13:14** Jesus tells his disciples to "flee to the mountains"

(a) Again, this is Jesus, speaking to His disciples. So If I want to be a disciple, I should pack my bags for Asheville, NC?

i) The context of the chapter is some of His followers pointing out the great structure of the temple: *What wonderful stones! What Wonderful buildings!*

ii) Jesus responds to this by telling them about the upcoming destruction of not only the temple, but of Jerusalem as well.

iii) This 'command' is being given as a warning: a specific time, a specific place, one single purpose, and only for those who are in Judea: *This command does not apply*

(2) In **Matthew 10:8** Jesus commands His disciples to go out and to *raise the dead!*

(a) Are we missing a portion of our ministry? Are we an incomplete group of followers because we haven't had any raising of the dead?

(b) Again, using the same principles, I will easily determine that this command was not for me!

3. Sometimes a command applies to me, but it is much more difficult to interpret:

a) Consider **Matthew 18:7-11**

(i) There have been those in history who have taken these commands to their most literal fulfillment: But is that what the Lord intended?

(a) This is Jesus, speaking to His disciples: If I were to apply the same principles that we have on our other examples, I'd come to the conclusion that this is for me: But how do I apply it? How is it fulfilled?

(b) Part of it means I have to recognize the language that Jesus is employing: By and large, this is hyperbolic language. The basic point being, whatever extreme you have to go to in order to make it to Heaven is worth it:

i) Are you sinning with your eyes? Don't put yourself in the places where they wander.

ii) Are you sinning with your hands? Don't put your hands in the vicinity of being able to lay hold of whatever it is they are doing.

b) This requires being very careful: We don't want to take away the impact of the Lord's Words, or make Him say something that He isn't. We simply want to understand how we apply what He has said.

III. Interpretation as it applies to Inferences:

A. Inferences are a vital portion of God's will: We do much of what we do on the basis of inference: The fact that we are all Christians today is based on the inference that Jesus still expected people to obey the gospel in the 21st century, even though there is no passage that states it in such a way:

i. But many times these come second nature to us: Lets look again at another very simple example to make the point:

a) In **Acts 4:36**, the text lets me know that the disciples called their fellow Christian Joseph, by the name of Barnabas. It also tells me that it means “Son of Encouragement” And yet it doesn’t explicitly state why they called him that:

(1) However, given the context of the verse, the fact that Luke took the time to give the definition, and it states it wasn’t his given name lead me to draw the only logical conclusion that they chose this name because he was such an encouraging person:

2. **Here is another** fairly simple, but a little bit more involved example:

a) Why do we take of the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week? Many might say, **Acts 20:7**. What does this text say? *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. (NASB)*

b) Is this given as a command? Does this say anything about every first day? Does this say that the first day is the only day I can take it on?

(1) Simply taking it by itself, **Acts 20:7** does not in any way say that the early Christians assembled every first day to take of the Lord supper: **But can I Infer that?**

(2) First, **in Matthew 26**, as well as Mark and Luke, I can determine that to take of it, as well as what to take, is indeed a command given to Jesus disciples. I can look in **1 Corinthians 11:20** and I can see that when they came together, it was supposed to be to take of the Lord’s Supper.

(3) I can look in **1 Corinthians 16:2** and see that the Christians were meeting *every 1st day of the week*. And again in **1 Corinthians 11:26** and see that this is something that disciples do until the Lord comes again.

(4) In all texts mentioned the Lord’s Supper, I find no other example of a day when they came together to take it.

c) All of these passages combined let me know that the Lord’s Supper was a command given to all disciples, they assembled every 1st day of the week, and their purpose was to remember the Lord’s death until He comes again. I *infer* that from all of these passages. **Acts 20:7** does not prove this point by itself.

IV. Interpretation as it applies to Examples:

A. We need to be able to apply these same principles to examples. By their very nature an example shows me what is allowed: Now, I might be able to infer that this particular example isn't bound on me: (meeting in an upper room, Paul's circumcision of Timothy, Taking a little wine for my stomach's sake etc.) But I need to approach example from the same stand point, so that I can find which examples are approved, what they mean to me, and how I apply them:

****The following portion of this outline was borrowed from an article written by Doy Moyer, and can be found on www.mindyourfaith.com Bro. Moyer happened to release this article as I was working on this portion of the lesson, and he hit the nail on the head; putting into words what I had been trying to figure out how to express.***

1. Here is the foundational principle: love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind (see Mark 12:30).
 - a) When we look into the New Covenant Scriptures and find God's people doing what pleases Him, should we not want to follow their examples?
2. If we ask, "But is that example binding?" are we really asking the right question? Such is like asking, "Do I have to?" Wouldn't those who love God with all their heart rather want to follow an example that God saw fit to show us? Shall we not ask, why is this here?
3. Think about it. By God's grace we have an example of something given that He likes. The Scriptures aren't all that large, considering what all might have been included. So when an example is given that shows God's approval, wouldn't His people who love Him with all their heart want to take special notice of this example? If we are able, and if our circumstances are comparable, wouldn't we want to follow the example that God, in His grace, found important enough to include in His message? Following such examples is part of loving Him.
4. Further, what example of God's people acting in a way that pleases Him is something that we would not want to follow? Is there a specific case of His disciples acting with His approval that we would look at today and say, "No, we

don't want to do that"? If we are able, why would we look at something that pleases Him, argue it is not necessary, then ignore it? What kind of attitude is this? Is it one that demonstrates a total commitment and love for God?

a) But aren't there details in some examples that really are not necessary? Of course there are. Not every detail is as significant as another might be. We need common sense, keeping matters in context and recognizing the difference between an incidental of telling what happened and core issues that led to the disciples acting as they did in the first place. Are we capable of drawing reasonable conclusions about these? God gave us minds to use. Let's use them.

B. The point is that God chose to include examples of His people acting for a reason.

Those who love Him would, I would think, look at those examples and, as much as within their abilities, and where the circumstances compare, follow them. "Do I have to?" (I.e., "Is it binding?") Why are we asking that question unless we are wanting some way around following what we see?

1. When God has, in His wisdom, provided a look into the actions that He likes, those who love Him should want to do the same. Why would we even debate that?