

Answering Questions About Bible Authority

“All authority has been given to Me
in heaven and on earth...”

– Matthew 28:18

Authority: A Far-Reaching Topic

- Why doesn't the church use instrumental music in worship?
- Why doesn't the church celebrate religious holidays like Christmas and Easter?
- Why doesn't the church hold fundraisers or support religious/charitable institutions?
- Why doesn't the church have secular entertainment activities and events?

Mistake: Start With Specifics

You often **cannot** convince a person that these things (and others like them) are wrong just because you don't find authority in the Bible!

- **A general understanding of authority must come first!**
 - Why is authority important?
 - How is authority established from the Bible?
- **And understanding authority starts with really understanding Jesus Christ!**

Christ and the Authority of the Scriptures

Luke 10:25-28 – Jesus believed and taught that the Scriptures are to be:

1. **Read** – “Have you not read...” (at least 9 times in NT)
2. **Learned** – cf. Matt 9:12-13; John 6:45
3. **Followed (i.e. obeyed)** – “Do this...”

Matt 4:4,7,10 – The Scriptures are to be obeyed above our own human will:

- God’s will in the Scriptures must come **first**
- Following the word of God is the source of life

Christ and the Authority of the Scriptures

How do I know which commands in the Bible are given for me to obey?

- *Look how Jesus used and applied Scripture!*
- *Establish authority in the same way He did!*

1. Commands
2. Approved examples
3. Necessary conclusions

Christ and the Authority of the Scriptures

Explicit Commands: The Scriptures come right out and tell you what to do.

- **Matt 19:16-22**
- These commands were written for this man to obey!
- Same pattern seen in Luke 10:25-28
- These commands were not up for interpretation: God expected them to be obeyed!

Christ and the Authority of the Scriptures

Approved Examples: The Scriptures give a pattern, approved by God, that His people **must** likewise imitate.

- **Luke 4:23-27**
- Christ did not work miracles in His hometown for the same reason that Elijah and Elisha did not:
- Cf. Matt 13:57-58
- *Other examples* – Mark 2:25-28; John 7:22-23

Christ and the Authority of the Scriptures

Necessary Conclusion: A fact that is inescapably implied by what is stated explicitly in Scripture.

- **Matt 22:32** – though no OT verse explicitly states, “There is life after death,” passages like Exod 3:6 **necessarily implied** the resurrection!
 - There was no way around this conclusion: it was inescapable!
- *Other examples* – Matt 19:1-6, 22:41-45

Christ and the Authority of the Scriptures

1. Commands
2. Approved examples
3. Necessary conclusions

**Christ's
Methods
not
Man's
Rules!**

What does Authority have to do with following Christ?

Jesus' use of the Scriptures demonstrates the need for authority from God in religion:

1. Only two sources of religion: either from God or from men.

- **John 7:17** – Doctrine either comes from God or men produced it on their own – **one or the other!**
- **Matt 21:23-27** – Authority for religious practice either comes from God or from men – **one or the other!**
- **If it's not from the Scriptures, it's not from God!**

What does Authority have to do with following Christ?

2. The teachings of God in the Scriptures are neither optional nor negotiable.

- **John 10:35** – “...the Scripture cannot be broken”
- **Matt 15:3-6** – “Why do you transgress the commandments of God because of your tradition?”
 - **They had no authority to change or ignore God’s command!**
- **Matt 5:17-20** – Who shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven?
 - **Those who ignore God’s commandments!**
- See also **Matt 19:17; Luke 10:28; John 12:50**

What does Authority have to do with following Christ?

3. Religious practice and doctrine must come from God in His word or else religion is false

- Did Christ ever justify a teaching or practice by appealing to what men *think, feel, desire, or have traditionally done*?
- **NO:** Christ always pointed directly to the Scriptures as all that is needed to serve God rightly.
- **Matt 15:7-9** – Doctrines and traditions of men make our worship vain and godless!
- See also **Luke 16:29-31; John 5:39**

What does Authority have to do with following Christ?

ALL of these truths apply to how we follow the authority of Christ Himself!

- **Mark 1:27** – Christ spoke with supreme authority
- **Matt 28:18-20** – All authority belongs to Christ
 - **“Observe all” commands: none are optional!**
- **Matt 7:21-29** – Read this passage: is it possible to argue that some of Christ’s commands don’t matter?
- **John 12:48-50** – His word alone will judge us!
- **Calling Jesus “Lord” and “Christ” requires submitting to His authority!**

Religion

From God:
His word

From Man:
Tradition, etc.

One or the other!

John 7:17

Matthew 21:25

- **Must be obeyed**
- **Must not be changed**

Matthew 28:18-20

- **Vain worship**
- **Leads hearts away from God**

Matthew 15:6-9

What does Authority have to do with following Christ?

Submitting to Christ's authority is constantly emphasized in the New Testament:

- **John 8:31** – “If you abide in my word...”
 - **John 15:16** – “If you love me...” (cf. 14:21; 15:14)
 - **II John 9-11** – Who is described in this passage as having no fellowship with God? (cf. I Tim 6:3-5)
 - **Col 3:17** – Whether in teaching or in practice, all must be done “in the name of Christ”!
- **“In the name of Christ” means teaching and practicing only with His authority!**

Abide in the Doctrine of Christ

II John 9-11

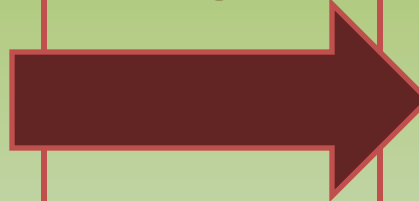
Doctrine of Christ:

*“Observe all things I
have commanded”*

Matt 28:18-20

**“He who abides...has
both the Father
and the Son”**

Transgress:



To cross a limit
or boundary

Doctrines of men:

*“In vain they
worship me”*

Matt 15:6-9

**“Whoever
transgresses...does
not have God”**

Is the whole NT authoritative?

Do we really need to follow the whole New Testament, or just the words of Jesus?

- **John 16:12-15** – Jesus commissioned His apostles to speak *His own words* by inspiration of the Holy Spirit
 - **Acts 2:1-11 (with vs. 22), 8:4-6, 14:3** – Granted the ability to perform miracles *to confirm their authority and truth*
 - **Matt 18:18** – The inspired teachings of the apostles are authoritative and binding, bound first “in heaven” (by God)
 - See also I Cor 14:37; I Thes 2:13; Gal 1:6-8; etc.
- **Simply stated: the entire NT is the inspired and authoritative word of Christ!**

Is the whole NT authoritative?

- **Christians find the authority of Christ in every word of the New Testament!**
 - Whether spoken by Christ, His apostles, or another inspired person, the entire New Testament is the word of Jesus Christ.
 - This revelation is **complete and final** in the New Testament – there are no other revelations from God to man!
 - The word of God is complete (II Tim 3:16-17), containing all things pertaining to life and godliness (II Pet 1:2-3), as Christ revealed to His apostles all truth (John 16:12)!
 - *“...if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:9)

Is the Old Testament Authoritative Today?

Should Christians look to the Old Testament for authority in worship and practice?

- **Matt 5:17-19** – Christ: the OT is valid until “all is accomplished” (or “fulfilled”)
 - **Luke 24:44-49** – Christ’s death and resurrection fulfilled all!
- **Gal 3:23-29** – The OT prepared for Christ but is not authoritative after Him
- **Heb 8:6-13** – The OT is obsolete; the New Covenant in Christ is in every way “better”
- **Col 2:11-23** – The OT was nailed to the cross: its time of authority has been fulfilled and come to an end.

Is the Old Testament Authoritative Today?

- Christians must not look to the Old Testament for authority in serving God today!
- The Old Testament fulfilled its purpose and was brought to completion upon the death of Christ.
 - The Old Testament *does* contain principles and history that are instructive to Christians (see Rom 15:4; I Cor 10:11)
 - **However**, the laws on worship (e.g. sacrifices, music), crime and punishment (e.g. stoning, civil laws), religious order (e.g. priesthood), etc. have no authority for Christians today whatsoever!
 - These requirements were “nailed to the cross” (Col 2:14)

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Remember how Christ applied the authority of the Scriptures!

1. Commands
2. Approved examples
3. Necessary conclusions

**Christ's
Methods
not
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How do we obey Christ's authority?

1. Commands
2. Approved Examples
3. Necessary Conclusions
4. Specific vs. General Authority
5. The Powerful Silence of the Scriptures

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Explicit Commands: orders given in the NT that must be obeyed and not changed.

- *“Love your enemies”* – **Matt 5:43-45a**
- *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”* – **Mark 12:13-17** (see Rom 13:7)
- *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized”* – **Acts 2:38** (spoken to believers, vs. 37)
- *“Teaching and admonishing one another in...songs”* – **Col 3:16**
- *“...let each one of you lay something aside...”* – **I Cor 16:1-2**

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Explicit Commands – some things to remember:

1. Christ gives us orders in His law that we must follow:

- “As I have given orders” (I Cor 16:1)
- See Gal 6:2; Rom 8:2; I Cor 9:21; Jam 1:25, 2:12
- Not a popular concept, but Jesus is not just our Savior: He is “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (I Tim 6:15)
- If we are not ready to obey Christ, we are not ready to be Christians! Read **Heb 5:8-9**.

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Explicit Commands – some things to remember:

2. Consider the context: to whom was the command spoken?

- Some commands in the New Testament are not for us to follow:
- **Matt 21:1-3** – Given to specific disciples at a specific time...
- **Luke 18:18-23** – These words, spoken while the Old Law was still in effect, will not bring you eternal life!
- **Acts 2:38, 16:31-33, 22:16** – which command is meant for you? Where are you on the path to salvation?

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Approved Examples: the NT contains *patterns* that Christians are meant to follow.

- *Pattern of Christ* – Luke 6:40; II Pet 2:21f
 - *Pattern of the apostles* – I Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17
 - **Acts 20:33-35** – Work and generosity
 - **Acts 20:27** – Need to teach all of God's word
 - **Acts 5:29** – Obey God over the laws of man
- **Notice that it is an explicit command to follow these approved examples!**

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Approved Examples: the NT contains *patterns* that Christians are meant to follow.

- *Pattern of faithful Christians* – Phil 3:17; I Cor 4:16-17; I Thes 1:6-8; II Thes 3:6-10
 - **Acts 20:7** – Meeting on each 1st day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper
 - **II Cor 16:1-2** – Taking a collection on the 1st day of the week to provide for the church's work
 - **Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1** – A plurality of qualified elders and deacons (cf. I Tim 3; Titus 1)

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Approved Examples – about the pattern of faithful Christians of the 1st Century:

- It is an explicit command to follow these approved examples, too!
- Who has the authority to suggest that we meet weekly for the Lord's Supper on Monday instead?
- Who has the authority to suggest that we hold raffles and bingo nights to raise money instead of the collection?
- Who has the authority to suggest churches have one elder (i.e. a "pastor") instead of an eldership?

➤ **Remember: ALL authority belongs to Christ!**

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Identifying Approved Examples – how do we tell if a certain NT example is binding or not?

1. Is it an *approved* example?

- Some examples did not meet God's approval
 - I Cor 6 – Brethren suing other brethren for money
 - I Cor 11 – The Lord's Supper turned into a meal
 - III John – Diotrophes, an unholy church dictator
 - Gal 2 – Peter shows ungodly partiality to the Jews
- **Examine the example:** is there indication the example was approved by the Lord?

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Identifying Approved Examples – how do we tell?

2. Is the example necessary or incidental?

- Some examples include actions or practices that are only incidental to obeying the actual command:
- Matt 28:18-20 – *Necessary*: go out and preach the gospel to everybody
 - *Incidental*: means of travel (by foot, chariot, ship?)
 - *Incidental*: mode of communication (sermon, letter?)
- Acts 20:7 – *Necessary*: on the first day of the week
 - *Incidental*: time and place

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Identifying Approved Examples – how do we tell?

2. Is the example necessary or incidental?

- Acts 8:30-40 – Necessary: preach Jesus, baptism
 - *Incidental*: In a chariot; baptizing outside (evidently)

➤ **Examine the example:** is the practice necessary to obedience or simply incidental?

- Takes careful study and examination!
- Must understand context, all commands/examples!
- Do you find the same example repeated in other passages with certain details differing?

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Identifying Approved Examples – how do we tell?

3. Was the example practiced by every church?

- Search the New Testament: is the example practiced universally, or specific to time/place?
 - *Leadership of the church: every NT example shows one church with a plurality of its own elders*
 - e.g. Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil 1:1; Tit 1:5; I Pet 5:1ff; etc.
 - *Assembling on the first day of the week: every NT example agrees (e.g. Acts 20:7; I Cor 16:1-2; etc.)*
- All churches followed the same teaching (I Cor 4:17): look for the examples universally practiced!

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Identifying Approved Examples – how do we tell?

4. Does the example conform to the entirety of the NT?

- God's word stands as truth as a whole (e.g. Ps 119:160; Acts 20:27)
- II Cor 11:7-9 – *Should preachers be supported?*
 - Yes! See I Cor 9:7-14, etc.
- Acts 16:15 – *Should children be baptized?*
 - No! How do you know Lydia had any small children?
 - See Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:37 – baptism requires sinful past, belief in gospel, conscience decision to change!

➤ ***Use caution:*** does your conclusion match the whole New Testament message?

How do we obey Christ's authority?

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How do we obey Christ's authority?

Necessary Conclusions: commands implied by other explicit statements.

- Notice some examples of necessary conclusions applied by the apostles in Scripture:
 - **Acts 2:29-31** –David the prophet is still dead but Psalm 16 speaks of a resurrection without physical decay.
 - **Implied:** Psalm 16 speaks of the Messiah, not David.
 - **Heb 7:11-12** – The Messiah would be a priest of a different order than Levi.
 - **Implied:** the OT, Levitical order would be replaced.

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Necessary Conclusions: commands implied by other explicit statements.

- **Acts 10:9-16,24-28** – God did not explicitly state the words quoted by Peter in vs. 28
 - **Implied:** The gospel should go to the Gentiles, too.
 - **I Pet 3:10-13** – Every physical thing will completely pass away at the end of days.
 - **Implied:** Christians should strive to live in holiness.
- **All these implied facts were logically and necessarily deduced from God's word!**

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Some Important Necessary Conclusions:

- 1. Acts 8:26-37 – a necessary conclusion concerning baptism in the name of Jesus Christ**
 - **Fact 1:** Philip “preached Jesus” to the Ethiopian.
 - **Fact 2:** The Ethiopian then asked, “What hinders me from being baptized?”
 - **Implied:** You cannot “preach Jesus” without teaching about baptism!
 - **Other evidence:** see Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 16:31-33; etc.

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Some Important Necessary Conclusions:

2. Acts 20:7 – a necessary conclusion concerning assembling for the Lord's Supper

- **Fact 1:** The Christians of the first century assembled for the purpose of breaking bread (i.e. for the Lord's Supper, cf. Acts 2:42; I Cor 11:23-26; etc.).
- **Fact 2:** These Christians, following the apostles' doctrine, assembled on the first day of the week.
- **Implied: These Christians assembled every first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper!**
- **Other evidence:** What if it read "on the first day of the year"? Cf. Exo 20:8; I Cor 16:1-2; etc.

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Some Important Necessary Conclusions:

3. **Acts 14:23; I Pet 5:1-4 – a necessary conclusion concerning the elders of local churches**
 - **Fact 1:** Elders were established “in every church.”
 - **Fact 2:** Elders were commanded to shepherd the flock “which is among you.”
 - **Implied:** Each church should have its own elders, meaning independent, autonomous leadership!
 - **Other evidence:** Do we ever read of a higher office than “elder” in the church? Cf. Phil 1:1; Acts 20:17; Tit 1:5; etc.

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Some Important Necessary Conclusions:

4. **Acts 18:11,18** – a necessary conclusion concerning the work of an evangelist
 - **Fact:** Paul preached in Corinth for well over 1.5 years
 - **Implied:** A preacher may “localize” and work with one congregation for an indefinite period of time!
 - **Other evidence:** Acts 19:10, 20:31; Acts 8:40 w. 21:8 (did Philip the evangelist remain in Caesarea, preaching and raising a family, for all these years?); etc.

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Accurately Forming Conclusions from Scripture:

1. Is the conclusion really necessary?

- If there are other logical explanations, it cannot be necessary.
- e.g. Heb 7:12 – A change of priesthood **of necessity** implied a change in the law: the conclusion was absolutely inescapable!

2. Does the conclusion concur with explicit truth?

- If the conclusion contradicts other clear passages of Scripture, it is neither necessary nor accurate.
- Always look for corroborating evidence!

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Unnecessary, Inaccurate Conclusions: Examples

- **John 20:22-24** – Was the conclusion concerning John's life/death necessary or forced?
- **I Cor 5:9-11** – Was the conclusion to avoid immoral unbelievers necessary or forced?
 - See Matt 5:14-16; John 17:14-19; Mark 16:15; etc.
- **Acts 16:15,33** – Is it necessary to conclude that children were baptized in these households?
 - Where is the evidence that they even had children?
 - See Acts 2:38; 8:12-13,37; 16:31; 22:16; etc.

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Authority In Action: Acts 15

- The early church established authority using these same methods!
- **Question:** Must Gentile Christians be circumcised as part of their obedience to the gospel?
- **Acts 15 – Direct Commands**
 - **vs. 7:** Peter commanded to go to Cornelius' house
 - **Remember:** Cornelius also followed a direct command – i.e. listen to the preaching of Peter (see Acts 10:6,22; 11:14)
 - **vs. 20:** James emphasizes the command(s) to abstain from idolatry

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Authority In Action: Acts 15

- **Acts 15 – Approved Examples**
 - **vs. 8:** Peter cites the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the case of Cornelius' household as an example
 - **vs. 9:** Peter combines the previous example with the similar baptism of the apostles (i.e. "us", see Acts 2)
 - **vs. 12:** Paul and Barnabas cite examples of God aiding their ministry amongst the Gentiles by granting wonders and signs to be done by them (see Acts 13:8-11, 14:1-3, 8-10, etc.)

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Authority In Action: Acts 15

■ Acts 15 – Necessary Conclusions

- **vs. 7-9:** God showed no distinction between Jews and Gentiles
 - **They were saved by faith without the Law of Moses!**
 - **Remember:** Peter previously reached the necessary conclusion that the Gentiles were not “unclean” (i.e. unworthy of the gospel; see Acts 10-11)
- **vs. 13-19:** 1. With God's approval, Gentiles were converted by Peter; 2. The prophets foretold the salvation of the Gentiles (cf. Amos 9:11-12)
 - **Gentiles should not be troubled with obeying the Mosaic Law (vs. 19)**

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Authority In Action: Acts 15

- God commanded that the gospel be preached to the Gentiles, and not the Law of Moses (see also Matt 28, Mark 16)
- God showed through examples (i.e. Holy Spirit baptism and miracles) that He approved of the Gentiles without the Law of Moses
- All inescapable conclusions pointed to the fact that Gentile converts are not expected by God to obey the Mosaic Law of circumcision (vs. 19)
- **A pattern to follow: these are the same methods we must use to establish authority!**

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Before we embrace any teaching or practice, we **MUST** search the Scriptures and ask:

- 1. Is there a direct command giving us authority to act?**
- 2. Is there an approved example giving us authority to act?**
- 3. Is there a necessary and inescapable conclusion giving us authority to act?**

➤ If we answer any of these questions with **“Yes”**:

- **We act with God's approval for good works**
- See II Tim 3:16-17)

➤ If we answer all of these questions with **“No”**:

- **We have no authority to go beyond God's word!**
- See II John 9-11; I Cor 4:6; Matt 15:6-9; Rev 22:18-19

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: the Lord's Supper

- **Find two passages with direct commands:**
 - e.g. commands teaching how to observe the Lord's Supper
- **Find two passages with approved examples:**
 - e.g. examples teaching with whom to observe the Lord's Supper
- **Find two passages implying necessary conclusions:**
 - e.g. conclusions teaching when to observe the Lord's Supper

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: the Lord's Supper

- **Find two passages with direct commands:**
 - Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-21
 - I Cor 11:17-34
 - *Emblems:* bread and fruit of the vine
 - *Purpose:* remembering, declaring Christ's death
 - *Attitude:* reverence, self-examination, thankfulness
 - *Not:* a supper to fill the belly, feed the hunger; *Not* to be enjoyed by some while refusing others

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: the Lord's Supper

- **Find two passages with approved examples:**
 - I Cor 11:17-22,33-34; Acts 20:7
 - To be observed only while assembled with the saints as a church on the first day of the week
 - We do not have the authority to take the Lord's Supper out of the assembly!
- **Find two passages implying necessary conclusions:**
 - Acts 20:7; I Cor 16:1-2; also Acts 20:6, 21:4, 28:14
 - Christians assembled *every* first day of the week

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: the Collection

- Find one passage with direct commands:
- Find one passage with approved examples:
- Find one passage implying necessary conclusions:

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: the Collection

- **Find one passage with direct commands:**
 - I Cor 16:1-2 – this is a direct command *to us* considering: 1) Paul's authority (cf. I Cor 14:37), and 2) Paul's uniform teaching to every church (cf. 1 Cor 4:17)
 - II Cor 9:6-11 – attitude, manner in giving
- **Find one passage with approved examples:**
 - I Cor 16:1-2 – this is also an approved example of Christians following the apostles' doctrine (cf. Phil 3:17)
 - Each Christian must lay by in store and give back to the Lord on the first day of the week

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: the Collection

- Find one passage implying necessary conclusions:
 - 1 Cor 16:1-2
 - “*that there be no collections*” at the moment it is needed: the church must have some form of treasury
 - In order for a collection to be made, Christians must assemble on the first day of the week in a common place
 - This is the work only of Christians in the local church, not visitors or unbelievers: the church has no authority to solicit the funds of non-members!

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: Baptism in the name of Jesus

- Find two passages with direct commands:
- Find two passages with approved examples:
- Find two passages implying necessary conclusions:

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: Baptism in the name of Jesus

- **Find two passages with direct commands:**
 - Mark 16:16 – must believe and be baptized to be saved
 - Acts 2:38 – repentance comes before baptism, while the remission of sins comes upon being baptized
- **Find two passages with approved examples:**
 - Acts 8:35-37 – baptism is for believers in Christ
 - Acts 22:16 – baptism is obeyed in order to have sins washed away

How do we obey Christ's authority?

Exercises in Authority: Baptism in the name of Jesus

- Find two passages implying necessary conclusions:
 - Acts 8:35-36 – cannot “preach Jesus,” i.e. preach the gospel, without preaching baptism
 - *Could you have convinced the apostles to “just preach the gospel” without preaching about baptism?*
 - Rom 6:1-4, Col 2:12 – baptism means nothing without faith, but with faith and obedience combined in baptism a new spiritual life begins (i.e. saved)
 - I Pet 3:21 with Heb 9:14 – baptism is an embodied prayer in which the believer accesses the saving power of the blood of Christ

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Two types of authority: Specific and General

Specific Authority

- Scripture explicitly states the *method and the intended result*
- No wiggle room here: limited authority
- Must carry out the command exactly as told

General Authority

- Scripture states the intended result *but not the method*
- Liberty to choose a method (*within certain bounds*)
- No authority to change the result

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Specific Authority (example 1)

- When the Scriptures specify exactly what to do **and** exactly how to do it
- Mark 16:15-16 – “*preach the gospel*”
 - Specifies exactly what disciples must preach
 - No wiggle room to preach a different message!
 - No authority to preach your own philosophies, opinions or personal agendas
 - cf. II Tim 4:1-2; I Pet 4:11

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

General Authority (example 1)

- When the Scriptures specify exactly what to do **but not** exactly how to do it
- Mark 16:15-16 – “*preach the gospel*”
 - Does not specify *how* the gospel should be preached – i.e. the method to use.
 - The apostles preached the gospel by word of mouth (Acts 2:11), letter (II Thes 2:15), and sending messengers (I Cor 4:17): ***they had the authority to choose!***
 - ***By extension***, we have general authority to preach via radio, TV, signs, newspapers, websites, etc.

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Specific Authority (example 2)

- Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1-2 – “*first day of the week*”
 - Specifies the exact day to assemble for Lord’s Supper
 - No liberty to change this assembly to a different day
 - No authority to decide to have the Lord’s Supper at a Saturday wedding or Friday funeral

General Authority (example 2)

- Acts 20:7 does not specify exactly *when* or *where* the church must assemble for the Lord’s Supper
- In Troas, they happened to meet in the evening in an upper room (rented, borrowed, or owned is not stated)

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

More on examples 1 and 2

- The commands to assemble and to preach give the church general authority to own/rent a building
- Churches in the New Testament were found at the Temple (Acts 2:46), in an unspecified room (Acts 20:8), in homes (Rom 16:5), perhaps in a school (Acts 19:9), and, by *necessary* conclusion, many other places not specified
- Since the *place is not specified*, the church has general authority to decide whether to own, rent, or borrow a place to assemble: *any choice is Scripturally acceptable.*

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

More on examples 1 and 2

- **The church does not have the authority** to own, rent or borrow gymnasiums, theaters, banquet halls, or any other structure to facilitate activities outside the work of the church authorized in the New Testament!
 - Do not function to preach the gospel to the world
 - Do not function to accommodate the assembly of the saints for worship and spiritual things
 - Do not function to enhance the *spiritual* growth of Christians

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Specific Authority (example 3)

- Matt 28:19 – “*baptizing them...*”
 - “baptizing” (Greek, *baptizo*) means immersion, burial
 - “to dip, to immerse, submerge” (Thayer’s Lexicon)
 - “to immerse, to submerge, to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet)” (Strong Dictionary)
 - Represents a *burial*, Rom 6:4, Col 2:12
 - Baptizing disciples (for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16) is a *specific command*
 - We have no liberty to change the method to sprinkling or pouring

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

General Authority (example 3)

- Matt 28:19 – “*baptizing them...*”
 - Does not specify where one should be baptized, who should do the baptizing, or what should be said
 - John baptized in a convenient place with “much water” (John 3:23)
 - Countless others were baptized in places that are totally unspecified (Acts 8:38, 16:15,33; etc.)
 - Paul clearly implied that it doesn’t matter *who* does the baptizing (I Cor 1:14-17)

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

General Authority (example 3)

- Matt 28:19 – “*baptizing them...*”
 - Not a word is said in Scripture concerning what must be said before a person is baptized...
 - *Except* that the person baptized must first make a public confession of faith (Acts 8:37, II Cor 9:13, II Tim 6:12-13, etc.)
 - River, pool, special baptistery, one witness or many, words before or none: these and other options are acceptable by general authority from the Scripture!

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Boundaries for applying general authority:

1. *Intended result must be authorized by command, example, and/or necessary conclusion*
 - Look at what you're trying to accomplish: is that result authorized in Scripture or not?
 2. *The method must not be specified by the Scriptures*
 - If God already specified how the results must be accomplished, there is no authority to change the method.
- Remember Matt 28:18-20; II John 9-11; II Tim 3:16-17

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Boundaries for applying general authority:

3. *The suggested method must be helpful and must edify*

- See 1 Cor 6:12, 10:23
- Paul *counters* the argument that “all things are lawful” by teaching on profitability and edification
- Even if many options are lawful, only helpful/profitable methods should be chosen
- Even if many options are lawful, only methods that edify (i.e. for spiritual growth) should be chosen

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Boundaries for applying general authority:

4. *The method chosen must be decent and orderly*

- See I Cor 14:40
- Especially in regards to the assembly, God desires for us to serve Him in decency and order
- *Decently* – gracefully, properly, in a seemly manner
- Esp. in regards to influence on others (cf. I Thes 4:12; I Cor 14:22-25)
- *In order* – regular arrangement, fixed succession

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

Boundaries for applying general authority:

5. *The method chosen must not cause weaker Christians to stumble*

- See I Cor 10:31-32 in context, w. Rom 14
- To give offense means *to cause to stumble* (see NIV)
- Esp. in regards to the individual Christians and his/her influence on other Christians and the world
- Some things are lawful for us to do, but may not be understood as lawful by less knowledgeable people
- In such company, we must guard our influence and “not let [our] good be spoken of as evil”

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

EXAMPLES - boundaries for applying general authority:

1. *Intended result must be authorized by command, example, and/or necessary conclusion*
 - *Suggestion to test:* a higher order of church organization than elders in the local church
 - Maybe a regional board of elders over many churches
 - Do we have general authority to extend organization beyond autonomous local churches?
- There is **no Scriptural authority** for organization or hierarchy beyond local elders! See Acts 14:23, etc.

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

EXAMPLES - boundaries for applying general authority:

2. *The method must not be specified by the Scriptures*

- *Suggestion to test:* make a time other than the first day of the week for certain people to observe the Lord's Supper
 - Do we have general authority to take the Lord's Supper away from the assembly and the first day of the week?
- There is **no Scriptural authority** for this method since the first day of the week and the assembly *are specified*.
See Acts 20:7; I Cor 11:17-34; etc.

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

EXAMPLES - boundaries for applying general authority:

3. *The suggested method must be helpful, must edify*

- *Suggestion to test:* should we do away with Bible study and worship midweek?
 - Maybe it's difficult to find a day/time when all members can attend
 - There is no Scripture demanding any assembly other than the first day of the week – though early Christians met often, even daily (cf. Acts 2)
- Doing away with other assemblies might be lawful, but it is not helpful in our teaching and does not help us grow!

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

EXAMPLES - boundaries for applying general authority:

3. *The suggested method must be helpful, must edify*

- Any practice that harms our ability to teach the world and to grow spiritually ourselves, any practice that causes division rather than unity – any such practice is not Scriptural, even if it appears that it is authorized!

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

EXAMPLES - boundaries for applying general authority:

4. *The method chosen must be decent and orderly*

- *Suggestion to test:* instead of a structured observance of the Lord's Supper, we should have an *ad lib* observance where everyone eats and speaks at their own leisure and inclination.
- Maybe structure and order seem rigid and cold...
- There is **no Scriptural authority** for taking part in the Lord's Supper in this scrambled fashion.
- However, if our observance seems rigid and cold, something needs to change, but decently and in order.

What if the Bible says *what* to do, not *how* to do it?

- If the Bible states *how* something is to be accomplished, there is no liberty to change that method.
- If the Bible states what to accomplish, but not how to do it, there is liberty for us to choose the method.
- There are boundaries that should be considered when choosing a method on our own.
- These boundaries often require much thinking, wisdom, discernment, and consideration of others.
- What is generally authorized in one situation might be very wrong, improper, inconvenient in another situation.
- What is specifically authorized for one church is to be followed the same way by *every* church.

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

- Often people justify their religious practices with the defense: **“The Bible doesn't say NOT to do it!”**
- Is this a proper defense?
- If the Bible is silent on a teaching or practice, does Christ authorize us to do whatever we wish?
 - What about soda and cookies during the Lord's Supper?
 - What about instrumental music in worship?
 - What about praying to Mary or some so-called Saint?
 - ***After all, the Bible doesn't say not to!***

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

The Powerful Silence of the Scriptures

- God's people must learn to respect the powerful silence of the Bible:
- **When God *does not* speak, it does not give us the authority to do whatever we want!**
- Two types of Biblical silence:
 - When the Bible **specifies** one teaching or practice and is silent about all other options.
 - When the Bible is **totally silent** about a teaching or practice altogether.

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

Examples of God's Silence:

1. **Heb 7:11-14** – God specifies the priesthood
 - Exo 29, Num 1 – The Old Testament priesthood was **specified** by God to belong to the Levites
 - God was silent about all the other tribes, including the tribe of Judah (see Heb 7:14)
 - God never said, “Priests must not come from Judah.”
- **When God specifies the way, His silence on all other options means those options are wrong!**

God's Silence and the Old Testament Priesthood

God's Word
Specified:

Tribe of Levi

(Exo 29, Num 1)

God's Word
Silent About:

Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Dan,
Naphtali, Gad, Asher,
Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph
and Benjamin

(Heb 7:14)

- Tribe of Levi was allowed to serve as priests
- **All** other tribes condemned by the **silence** of the Old Law!

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

We understand communication and authority in this way every single day!

- *Boss says:* “Take the company credit card and buy paper and staples.”
 - Would this authorize you to buy a new computer, lunch for your colleagues, a soda fountain for the office?
- *Parents say:* “You can go to the library this afternoon.”
 - Does this authorize you to stop by a friend's house for awhile, play some video games, then go to the library?
- *Teacher says:* “Write a paper about the President Taft.”
 - How will it go over if you write about Mick Jagger?

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

Examples of God's Silence:

2. **Lev 10:1-6** – Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire
 - Exo 27,30 – God **specified** how the lamp and the incense were to be cared for by the priests
 - God was silent about all sources of fire
 - God never said, “Priests must not use other fire.”
 - Nadab and Abihu chose to use “strange” (NASU), “unauthorized” fire **“which He had not commanded”**
- **When God specifies the way, His silence on all other options means those options are wrong!**

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

Examples of God's Silence:

3. II Sam 7:1-11 – David presumes to build a temple

- David and Nathan *thought it was a good idea* to build a house for God
 - God was totally silent on this issue: He never said either to do or not to do it!
 - David and Nathan were wrong: God did not want David to build a temple for Him!
- When the Bible is **totally silent**, we cannot guess God's mind: **we have not authority to act!**

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

Examples of God's Silence:

4. Acts 15:24 – False teaching on circumcision

- Some teachers were going around telling Gentile converts to be circumcised and follow the Old Law
- The gospel was **totally silent** on this issue – “to whom we gave no such commandment”!
- Now, the gospel **did not say**: “And do not teach converts to obey the Old Law.”
- When the Bible is **totally silent**, we cannot guess God's mind: **we have no authority to speak!**

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

The Powerful Silence of the Scriptures:

- When the Bible is silent, that silence DOES NOT give us the authority to do whatever we feel is right!
- If God specifies the way, all other options are condemned.
- When the Bible is **totally silent**, we do not have authority to speak or act (see I Pet 4:11).
- **Isa 55:8-9** – We cannot guess the mind of God: only the Scriptures teach us His true will (II Tim 3:14-17)
- **Deut 12:32** – God's people must obey His commands without adding to or taking away from His word!

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

Lessons learned from God's Silence:

1. The Bible does not say *not* to pray to Mary or other “saints” – is this practice authorized?
 - **NO** – God specifies that Christians pray to Him through Jesus Christ (cf. Col 3:17; I Tim 2:5)
2. The Bible does not say *not* to use instruments in worship – is this practice authorized?
 - **No** – God specifies that Christians worship Him through singing, making melody with our hearts (cf. I Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Jam 5:13)

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

Lessons learned from God's Silence:

3. The Bible does not say *not* to choose a special day to celebrate Christ's birth – is this practice authorized?

- **NO** – God is totally silent concerning any special holiday remembering Christ, except for His death (cf. I Cor 11:)
- Christians are thankful and worshipful to Christ every day: we have no authority to choose one day as *the* day to celebrate His birth, resurrection, etc.
- ***We cannot guess the mind of God!***

Can we do whatever we want if the Bible doesn't say NOT to do it?

Lessons learned from God's Silence:

4. The Bible does not teach the church not to provide secular education and entertainment – are these practices authorized?
 - **NO** – God is totally silent about the church teaching anything but the truth (I Tim 3:15) and providing for anything but spiritual edification (I Cor 14:26)
 - **Christians don't require a "Thou shalt not..." to know that we must respect the powerful silence of God in the Scriptures!**

