

**ESTABLISHING  
BIBLICAL  
AUTHORITY  
For  
Our Beliefs  
And  
Practices**

**Prepared by**

**Paul E. Cantrell**



# **ESTABLISHING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY**

**For Our Beliefs  
And Practices**

**12 Lessons**

**Prepared by**

**Paul E. Cantrell  
84 Northview Dr.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050**

[pecantrell@juno.com](mailto:pecantrell@juno.com)

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Lesson One

## ***"Man's Need For A Standard In Religion"***

***"Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?'"*** (Matthew 21:23)

If man is a free moral agent, a creature of choice, but one who is accountable for his actions, then, he needs to have some kind of a standard for measuring his actions as to their acceptability. The very concept of *right* and *wrong* demands a standard by which one determines the rightness and wrongness of his actions. A judgment someday for all mankind would obviously demand some kind of a standard by which one's actions would be measured.

A very pertinent question to this issue is: **"Who determines the standard?"** Does each man become his own standard, or a group of men that are better qualified to give directions to their fellowman, or does it need to be someone outside of man that could be depended upon to be totally objective in his approach?

The various approaches to finding an authoritative standard have been divided into what could be called: **Subjective** and **Objective** standards. The **Subjective** standards would be those that come from within the person, such as: his conscience, what he feels about something, what his heart dictates, his own experiences and understandings about things. The **Objective** standards would be those that come from outside the individual; and, there could be many of these, such as: The Majority, The Minority, Parents, Relatives, Creeds of men, Worldly Philosophy, Human tradition, Latter Day Revelation, The Church, The Preacher, Christian Schools, Religious Editors or Magazines, etc. Thus, we still have our problem: **What really should be the standard and who determines the standard?** All of the above things, both subjective and objective, are in reality subjective in nature because they all come from man, from within man. And it is quite obvious that no one of the above can serve as a purely objective standard for all mankind. In the words of Judges 17:6, ***".....every man did that which was right in his own eyes."***

### **THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY**

Of what value is a standard if it has no authority behind it? Why go by the selected standard if there is no reward or punishment? If every man does that which is right in his own eyes and receives no reward or punishment for his actions, of what value is the standard?

One concept of authority involves the power, the right to command, and the ability to enforce his will upon other men to a limited extent, but only as it has to do with this life. He is helpless to do anything beyond this world.

Man has divided Authority into two kinds: **Inherent** and **Delegated**. **Inherent** Authority is the beginning place of all authority. **Delegated** Authority is that which is past on to others with the understanding that they carry out the intentions of the one who has the **Inherent** Authority. God is obviously the only one who can give us a purely objective standard to direct, correct, or control our thoughts, words, and deeds into the right paths. For God is the one in whom all Power and Authority resides; all Authority **INHERES** in Him. *"...I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou upright."*(Genesis 17:1). Authority originated with God. He is the ruler of this Universe: *"He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves."*(Psalm 66:7). He is the all-powerful One by virtue of:

- 1) Who He is—the ever existing One;
- 2) What He has done—creator of all things;
- 3) What He does—sustains all things.

And this all-powerful God has chosen to give us a written account of His Will for man. In these last days, God has spoken to us *"...through his son."*(Hebrews 1:2). He has the Authority to command and demand obedience from subjects (Matthew 28:18). His Will for man has been given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the apostles to be written down and preserved for all time (John 16:13; Ephesians 3:3-5; Matthew 24:35). Mankind is to continue steadfastly in the *"apostles doctrine"*(Acts 2:42) because it has the Authority of God behind their teaching. The apostles did not originate the doctrine, but were given it by God's Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The admonition is given in Colossians 3:17: *"...whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..."* Recognize His Authority over you as you conduct your life! Man is warned that if he does not abide in the *"...doctrine of Christ"* that he has not God!(2 John 9). Our lives are to be lived within the bounds of God's directions.

The reason that is given by God for man's need of a standard from Him is man's inability to direct his own steps correctly (Jeremiah 10:23). Man is encouraged in Proverbs 3:5: *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."* Man is also warned: *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."*(Proverbs 14:12). Too much involvement in sin has blurred man's ability to reason correctly and understand what is best and right. He is prejudiced in his conclusions and gives in too much to his passions and desires. He needs an absolute and perfect standard by which his life can be measured (James 1:25). Only God is able to give such a standard.

## **RESPECTING GOD'S AUTHORITY**

It is one thing to admit that we need God's help to supply us with a standard of Authority for our lives, but quite another thing to completely allow it to be our standard in our lives. Through the centuries men have paid lip service to the Bible as "our Authority in religion," but in their attitudes and lives have been very disrespectful of it. Several terms have been used to try to identify this spirit in men such as: **Rationalists, Modernists, and Liberals**. It becomes quite obvious as one listens to such men that they are turning from a purely objective standard and

going back to a subjective standard again. It is allowing the human element to creep back in so much that it undermines and destroys the objectivity of the standard. Their minds, hearts, consciences, experiences, understandings become the standard by which the BIBLE is being measured, rather than the reverse! This approach starts with the denial of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and the Bible becomes useless as a guide for man.

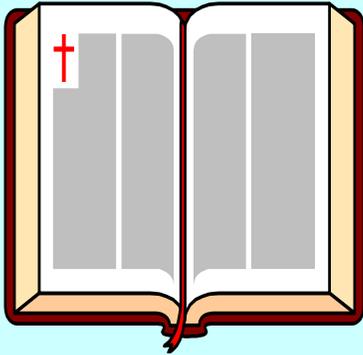
If God's Authority is to be respected by man; then, His Word must be respected. If it is God's message to man, then, it is the only safe, reliable, and infallible guide for man and should be listened to. If it is not from God, it is worthless. It is all or nothing at all. If experience becomes the measure of the Bible, not the Bible to measure experience, then man has no acceptable standard. Respect for God's Authority is shown by willing, loyal, and faithful obedience to His Will (Luke 6:46; John 14:15). To choose which things to obey and which things to disobey in God's Law is disrespectful of God. Jesus illustrated in His life the way to show respect for God—perfect obedience to His Will (Hebrew 5:8-9).

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF**

- 1. Do you believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God? (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:10-13).**
- 2. Do you believe God accepts acts of worship for which there is no Bible Authority? (Revelation 22:18-19).**
- 3. Do you think people can walk by faith while doing things not taught in the Bible? (Romans 10:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14).**
- 4. Do you think God speaks to people today in any way except through the Bible? (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3).**
- 5. Do you think that subjective emotional experiences are as authoritative as an objective revelation from God?**
- 6. Is the knowledge gained through subjective emotional experiences more "relevant" than knowledge gained through the study of the Bible?**
- 7. Do you think one who has had a subjective emotional experience is more spiritual, heavenly-minded, than one can become by a study of the Bible?**
- 8. Do you think teachers of false doctrines should be denied church fellowship? (2 John 9-10).**
- 9. Which of the following are considered your Authority in religion:**
  - What is right in our own eyes (Proverbs 12:15; Deuteronomy 12:8).**
  - Men's own ideas (Jeremiah 10:23; Acts 5:29).**
  - Your feelings (Proverbs 14:12).**
  - Your own understanding of things (Romans 10:1-3; Proverbs 3:5).**
  - My heart (Proverbs 28:25-26).**
  - The Bible only.**

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is man an accountable human being? (Joshua 24:15)
2. Will man be called into judgment to give an accounting of his thoughts, words, and actions? (John 12:48)
3. Can man determine "right" or "wrong" without a standard? (Proverbs 14:12; Romans 2:14-15)
4. Whom is a man to please in his thoughts, words, and actions: Self, Others, or God? (Matthew 7:21)
5. What are some "subjective standards" that people use in their religious decisions?
6. What are some "objective standards" that people use in their religious decisions?
7. What is the only "purely objective standard" that men can turn to for guidance? (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
8. What is involved in the concept of Authority?
9. In whom does all Authority reside? (Genesis 17:1; Matthew 28:18)
10. How have men who professed to accept the Bible shown disrespect for it through the centuries?
11. What is the only way that we can really show our respect for God's Authority in our lives? (Luke 6:46; John 14:15)



# **AUTHORITY IN RELIGION**

**INHERITED  
OR  
DELEGATED**

**1 – LEGISLATIVE**

**2 – EXECUTIVE**

**3 - JUDICIAL**

Lesson Two

## ***"AVENUES OF APPROACH TO THE BIBLE AS A STANDARD"***

The evidence is overwhelming to the student of history that it is not enough to come to the conclusion that the Bible is the one and only objective, safe, reliable, infallible guide for our lives, but that another step at least must be taken—to find out just **HOW** the Bible authorizes us to think, say, and act in a correct way before God.

The main thrust of the Reformation Movement was to strive to place the Bible in the hands of the people and to encourage them to let it be their sole guide in their lives. It soon became apparent that there was another problem to be dealt with—for various religious groups began to spring up, each claiming the Bible as their authority, but teaching things differently from one another. Upon a closer examination, it became obvious that **HOW** people approached the Bible made a big difference in the outcome of what they understood.

### **VARIOUS "SUBJECTIVE" APPROACHES TO THE BIBLE**

**1. Church Control Method of Approach.** People were not encouraged to read the Bible because they were told they could not properly understand it by themselves. The "clergy" were the only ones who could really understand; therefore, listen to the official doctrine of the church and follow it. Objectivity is usually lost in this approach because it is usually interpreting Scripture to uphold "church doctrine."

**2. Highly Figurative Method of Approach.** Everything in the Bible is turned into either metaphors, allegories, or a highly figurative understanding. Plain simple statements in Scripture do not mean what they seem to say. Of course, only certain "qualified" persons can understand what the Bible is really trying to say. Again, it becomes obvious that this is just another subjective approach to make the Bible say what a person desires.

**3. Dogmatic Method of Approach.** This is possibly the most widely used approach in the Protestant churches. It is where one dogmatically assumes a doctrine to be true and then sets out to find support for it in the Bible. This approach requires that Scriptures be taken out of their context and given a mean that the writers never intended. The entire system of Calvinism (the backbone of Protestantism) is supported with this method. Unrelated and non-supportive "proof text" are used to give "credibility" to these doctrines. This too is a very subjective approach to the Bible and is very misleading. It should be evident that with these and possibly other approaches to the Bible that confusion and division would be the outcome—as history well attests to!

## AN "OBJECTIVE" APPROACH TO THE BIBLE

During the 18th and 19th centuries men were struggling to find a solution to these religious differences and divisions by making a harder effort to be more objective in their approach to the Bible. This approach is often referred to as the "**Inductive Method of Approach.**" It is considered to be a common sense approach to understanding the Bible just like men would approach any other writings. Following are some of the ideas involved in this method:

1. It is to study the Bible with an open mind, free from prejudice.
2. It is to allow the Bible to speak freely and fully on a subject before a conclusion is drawn.
3. That no passage is to be interpreted in a way to cause it to contradict other clear and understandable passages.
4. Unclear passages are to be understood in harmony with plain passages on the subject.
5. One is never to force an unnatural meaning on a text.
6. The context must indicate whether the language is to be taken in a figurative way.

In the process of refining their ideas men began to try to coin phrases or slogans that would help to express the above thoughts, such as:

1. "Back to the Bible and to it alone."
2. "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are silent."
3. "Call things by Bible names, and do things in Bible ways."
4. "In matters of Faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; and in all things, love."

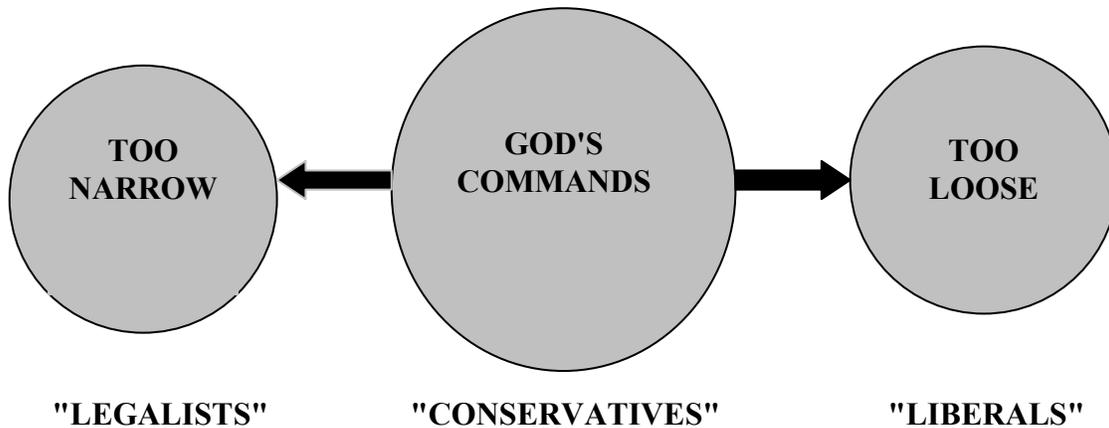
## ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

Objectively approaching the Bible and letting it speak to us its message is certainly the approach that men must take if God is truly to give them guidance for their lives. But additional problems have cropped up to spoil this hard sought after solution. It became obvious that it is not only vital to take the proper approach to the Bible, but it is also vital to understand **HOW** the Bible authorizes a thing to be done. Some of the issues that have faced the Restoration Movement in particular in this regard are:

1. The use of Musical Instruments in worship.
2. The establishment of an Organized Missionary Society through which the churches could work.
3. Is it right to use more than one cup at the Lord's table?
4. Should preachers be supported to work with one congregation?
5. Whether it is right to have Bible Classes on Sunday.
6. Contributing to an Orphan's Home from the church treasury.
7. Certain kinds of cooperation among congregations pose questions.

These and other issues have forced a closer study to the question of how to determine just what God wants us to do. The issue is not whether one believes the Bible to be the Inspired Word of

God or not, but a question of just **HOW** do we determine with assurance what God wants of His creatures. The chart below shows how different groups have labeled each other in regards to these questions:



A "Conservative" is considered as one who follows God's Commands and they alone. While the "Liberal" is considered as one who is not satisfied to stay with just what God Commands. And the "Legalists" is considered as one who binds his opinions as the Law of God upon others. The question of **HOW** the Bible authorizes is one that continues to challenge concerned people, and sometimes, in some areas of study, it has not been easy to find a solution that all would accept.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The remainder of our study will look back at the major areas that are in opposition to the Bible as an absolute authority for man and then try to look closely at the quest, *"Just how does the Bible Authorize something to be done?"*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What was the main thrust of the "Reformation Movement" and how successful was it?
2. Name and describe some "subjective" approaches to the Bible as an Authority.
3. What is the "Inductive Method" of approach to the Bible and why is it the correct approach in your mind?
4. Are the present issues in the church over disbelief of the Bible as the inspired Word of God or something else? (Explain your answer)
5. How are the terms: "Conservative," "Legalist," and "Liberal" used in regards to "How" the Bible authorizes a thing to be done?
6. Is it possible for one to sincerely be trying to follow God and still be wrong? How does God view that person?

## Lesson Three

**"REASON AND REVELATION"**

One of the factors that shows man's uniqueness in the world is his mind (his intelligence) that far exceeds that of the animal world. And it is a significant fact that an intelligent God has chosen to communicate with His intelligent creation by an inspired Revelation. The inspired apostle stated this in 1 Cor. 2:11-13: ***".....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 Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."***

The mind of God has been revealed to the mind of men! The very fact that God gave man an intellect and then gave him a Revelation would infer that he needs to use that intelligence to understand His message to man (Ephesians 3:3-5). The fact that man has reasoning powers is an indication that God intended for him to use such (Isaiah 1:18).

**CAN HUMAN REASONING  
BE THE STANDARD FOR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES?**

God never intended for man's intellect to be used as a means of rejecting God or His Will for man. Indications are evident that God has allowed man in the past to seek after Him with their own human reasoning and conscience (Acts 17:27-30; Romans 2:14-16), but it is no longer God's Will for man to go on his own, but has given him a Revelation to follow. Man's opportunity to seek after God without a Divine Revelation ended in a miserable failure on man's part! He had all the evidences that he needed to know God, but instead, man became vain in his thinking and ***"changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things"*** (Romans 1:18-25). Since the world by its own wisdom did not choose to retain the knowledge of God in their hearts nor worship Him as the One True and Living God, it pleased God to send a Revelation to be preached to all mankind about the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:21). Man's so-called wisdom is foolishness and vain in comparison to the wisdom of God (Revelation—1 Corinthians 3:19-20). Thus, strong emphasis is placed on man's need to listen to what God has to say to him, to trust in His Wisdom, and not to depend upon his own wisdom (Proverbs 3:5). It should be evident to man that he just does not have the means to direct his own steps, but needs to turn to God for direction (Jeremiah 10:23).

**REASONING UPON REVELATION**

God did not give man the ability to reason and forbid him to use it! Rather, it has been given as a tool to better come to know God and His Will for man. Our reasoning powers can be well used to come to an understanding of who God is and what God is saying to man in His Revelation.

In fact, the intelligence of man is greatly challenged by the Scriptures, not for a short time, but possibly all of one's lifetime. Man is capable of knowing there is a God from the evidences about him (Romans 1:19-21; Acts 17:24-28; Psalms 19:1-3). His intellect should be challenged to seek to find and to know this God of the universe, to know His will, and to strive to give proper worship and submission to such a Being (Hebrews 11:6). Man's mind is capable of not only understanding God's Will, but to see the reasonableness of such (Romans 12:2; Acts 10:34). Thus, man's reasoning ability is not to be used to deny God or put down His Revelation, but rather to aid man in finding, knowing, and obeying the God who created him. Thus, intellect is not the authority in Religion, but merely an aid towards the end of understanding and accepting God's Revelation to man.

## REASON AND FAITH

Can a thinking person be religious? Can a believer be intellectually honest in what he holds to in Religion? Can Beliefs be supported by evidence? Does it matter? Can a person go ahead and believe whether or not it makes sense? Why do some people with seemingly strong religious convictions begin to doubt and come to a point of disbelief as they attend schools of higher education? Does a choice have to be made between serious intellectual inquiry and a genuine commitment to God?

As the pressures of higher educational inquiry begin to challenge the religious person's faith, there are various responses that can be given:

- 1. Some give up their faith as being unreasonable.**
- 2. Others withdraw their faith from intellectual scrutiny.**
- 3. Still others will compromise and live with a weakened faith, not believing that it can withstand a full intellectual scrutiny, but unwilling to break their ties with Religion.**

None of the three above responses are necessary nor desirable. Faith should be able to live in this modern world with just as strong a vigor as it has always been able to do in the past. Faith and Reason are not enemies, but friends, allies. Intellectual integrity involves a willingness to submit one's Beliefs to rational investigation. The Bereans were praised by God's penman, Luke, when he said they were more noble than those at Thessalonica because they received the word preached with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see if the message was valid or true (Acts 17:11). Upon the basis of close investigation, they were able to believe the message as being from God (Acts 17:12). Belief was based upon evidence to support what was preached as being true. Christians are even urged by Peter to be ready always to give a "reason" for the hope to which they hold (1 Peter 3:15).

Reason can pave the way for faith, but as well it can help make faith grow. Intellectual obstacles can often hinder a person from believing and committing their lives to God. The following questions can illustrate this:

- 1. How can there be a just and loving God that would allow all the evil, sickness, and pain in the world?**
- 2. How can one reconcile contemporary scientific conclusions with some Biblical statements?**

### **3. How can one be sure that Religion is not just the evolving of man's social conditioning or a way to satisfy some psychological need?**

Questions of this nature need to be dealt with by a reasoning process often before faith can be possible. Thus, reason can prepare the way for faith. It makes faith reasonable to the questioning mind. Thomas is a good example of one who wanted to see the evidence of Jesus' resurrected body before he would believe (John 20:25; Hebrews 11:1).

To love God with all of one's mind (Matthew 22:37) would certainly indicate that man's intellect needs to be challenged and used to come to a greater knowledge and appreciation of God in one's life. The intellect can be a means upon which faith can grow (Hebrews 5:11-6:1; Colossians 2:2).

But faith is not based on such overwhelming evidence that man doesn't have a choice. He can choose to believe or disbelieve regardless of how strong the evidence might be. Faith is often held to in spite of difficulties that are faced. Job trusted in God even though he could not understand why he was being made to suffer (Job 13:15). Also, Abraham maintained his faith in God even though he was commanded to offer his son as a sacrifice to God (Hebrews 11:17-19). Rational evidence does not guarantee faith, but such can be a help to faith!

## **REASON AND UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WILL**

To reject an understanding and conclusion drawn from Scripture study because it required the principles of logic and reasoning, and not expressly stated, is to hold a very prejudiced opinion arrived at by faulty use of logic and reasoning! Why would anyone want to attack the proper function of reason and logic in arriving at correct understandings of Biblical teaching unless it would put their beliefs in a very bad light of being illogical and wrong.

Failure to use one's logical processes in arriving at truthful conclusions can lead to chaos, absurdity and false conclusions, or no conclusions at all. Man needs to take a logical and reasonable approach in his study and understanding of Scripture. Unless one is convinced of the necessity of using valid rules of interpretation, he will never be able to arrive at the truth on many matters (2 Timothy 2:15). Especially is reasoning important in making the application of Scripture understanding in one's life (Hebrews 5:14). The Scriptures tell us that Philip preached Jesus to the Eunuch. But in preaching Jesus, he preached the necessity of belief and baptism, because the Eunuch requested to be baptized after hearing the preaching of Jesus (Acts 8:35-36). Reasoning is involved in determining the generic/specific nature of commands. The generic nature of a command requires the use of his good sense to find a means of carrying out the command. The specific nature requires that we do exactly what God has commanded.

Human reasoning must never become the standard of Authority, but reason and logic is a necessity in order to arrive at a correct understanding of God's truth!

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Why has God given man a mind and the ability to reason? (Joshua 24:15; Isaiah 1:18; 1 Peter 3:15)**
  
2. **Why cannot human reasoning, by itself without a Revelation from God, be man's standard of authority? (Romans 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 1:21)**
  
3. **Has God allowed mankind to follow his own understandings, reasonings, and conscience in the past? (Acts 17:27-30; Romans 2:14-16)**
  
4. **If so, with what results? (1 Corinthians 1:21; Romans 1:23-24)**
  
5. **In what ways can reason be used with regards to Revelation?**
  - a) **Psalms 19:1-3—**
  - b) **Hebrews 11:6—**
  - c) **Acts 10:34—**
  - d) **Acts 17:11—**
  
6. **How does faith and reason fit together?**
  - a) **John 20:25—**
  - b) **John 20:30-31—**
  - c) **Hebrews 11:1—**
  
7. **In what ways can reason help one to better understand the teachings of Scripture?**
  - a) **2 Timothy 2:15—**
  - b) **Hebrews 5:14—**
  - c) **Acts 8:35-36—**

## Lesson Four

### “TRADITION AND REVELATION”

When the word “tradition” is used in a conversation with certain people, it often triggers a “red flag!” The reason is that tradition has a bad meaning in their minds. In fact, the word “tradition” has various meanings for various people. This is the reason why this lesson is necessary in order to clarify the meaning and find the proper use of the term.

A fact, that is often not as obvious to some as it is to others, is that everyone has traditions: religious or otherwise; and, it is impossible to be free of traditions. Even striving to be free of tradition becomes a tradition in itself!

Jesus kept traditions! He constantly taught in their synagogues (John 18:20), which was a tradition that arose after the Babylonian captivity. He gave thanks before eating which was not commanded in the Law, but was a tradition among the people (Luke 24:30). Even the singing of a hymn at the conclusion of the observing of the Passover Feast was a tradition Jesus observed (Mark 14:26). Evidently, tradition is not all bad!

But then, Jesus turned right around and condemned the Religious leaders for their traditions (Matthew 15:1-3). How is it that tradition can be okay to practice on one hand and condemned on the other?

### BIBLICAL USE OF TRADITION

Tradition is defined as, “the handing down by oral communications customs and practices that have become accepted, often as ‘unwritten laws.’” Generally, tradition results when customs and practices continue over a long period of time. Tradition could also be defined simply as “that which has been handed down.” Following are the various ways the word is used in the New Testament:

- 1. The traditions (teachings) of the “Fathers” or “Elders” of the Jewish people.** Paul said he was zealous in keeping the traditions of the Fathers (Galatians 1:14). Whether this is to be understood as zealously keeping the Law of God, and/or the interpretations and traditions that were handed down from their forefathers is not altogether clear. Upon one occasion Paul said he was blameless before the Law (Philippians 3:6), indicating his intense desire to live up to the teachings of the Law. If used in this sense, it would be a good sense.
- 2. Traditions (teachings) of the elders that changed or replaced the teachings of the Law of God.** Jesus so understood this use of the word when he condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for allowing their traditions to replace God’s Law (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13). Instead of their traditions providing a way for God’s Law to be carried out, they literally made God’s Law of none effect. Thus, this would be a use of the word in a bad sense.
- 3. Traditions (teachings) handed down among religious peoples for generations that were being bound upon Christians at Colossae (Colossians 2:8).** Its bad use is obvious in this

text from the warning given about it, as well as the company it kept: Philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

4. **Traditions (teachings) of the Apostles to the church while among them (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6).** The message was first oral and later came to be written down. They were to be authoritative for their lives because they were the teachings of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Paul also used this Greek word in 1 Corinthians 11:2 (translated ordinances) in the same sense as in the second Thessalonian letter.

Thus, it becomes necessary to watch the context closely to see whether the word is used in a good or bad sense.

## **TRADITION VERSUS GOD'S COMMANDMENTS**

It was obvious that Jesus condemned the traditions of the Jewish elders because of the conflict with the keeping of the commandments of God. Their traditions had replaced God's commandments as Law for the people. In fact, their traditions had become the "doctrines and commandments of men" and had made their worship vain (Matthew 15:1-9). In Colossians 2:8, it seems evident that men were trying to bind their "doctrines" upon Christians as Law (Colossians 2:21-22). In this sense, tradition is in conflict with, sets itself up against, the Revelation of God. When this is done, ALL SUCH TRADITION IS WRONG, no matter how long standing or how many people that accepts it.

## **TRADITION AND GOD'S COMMANDMENTS**

Since Jesus kept some traditions of the Jewish people, we conclude that not all "traditions" are wrong or evil. Tradition can be either a servant or a master, depending upon how it is viewed. If tradition is merely a way (an aid) in carrying out the commandments of God, then they are a servant. But when they either replace God's commandments or become "law" (the doctrines and commandments of men), then they become the master! Following are a few items to illustrate how tradition can be a servant in aiding one to carry out God's commands:

1. The use of a song leader in worship.
2. Singing an invitation song at the close of the sermon.
3. The type of building we meet in for worship.
4. Whether we have more than one assembly on the Lord's Day.
5. Whether to have Bible Classes for all ages.
6. Individual communion cups.
7. How long for a sermon to be.
8. Use of a special version of the Bible to preach from.
9. etc.

When any of the above become authoritative and binding as Law upon God's people, we have allowed tradition to replace the Law of God as authority. The church is facing some real problems in looking upon traditional ways of doing things as "Law and Gospel."

Each congregation of God's people is autonomous (self-governing in areas of judgment). They can make their own decisions in matters of ways to carry out God's commands where they are general in nature. Each should feel free to do what is best for them as a separate congregation. While at the same time, there should be a spirit of cooperation in areas that would make it easier for God's people to obey God. Similarities of times and the number of services on Sunday has been an effort to cooperate among congregations of God's people. But at any time that a congregation feels it is wise for them to do otherwise, they should feel free to do so. If a congregation felt it was best for them to meet at 3:00 in the afternoon, rather than at 9:30 or 10:00, they should feel free to do so without receiving a disapproval look from fellow congregations.

## **KEEPING TRADITIONS UNDER CONTROL**

The attitude towards tradition should be: "We instituted them to serve our purpose and we can also do away with them when they no longer can effectively serve that purpose." The following suggestions are offered to help keep traditions in their lawful place:

1. Know what is tradition and what is Law.
2. Never let tradition become the Master.
3. Don't let traditional ways of doing things cause you to harshly judge a brother who differs with you about them.
4. Don't set up traditions as a test of fellowship.
5. Recognize the dangers of tradition blinding one to new and better ways of carrying out God's commands.
6. Never let traditions become "hallowed Law", nor replace the Law of God. Tradition is not the Authority.
7. Recognize that following long standing customs (traditions) gives a sense of security, but may need to be changed less they become a danger to the church's unity and harmony in carrying out God's commands.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How would you define Tradition?
2. Is it possible to live very long without developing traditions?
3. Do all religious groups have traditions?
4. Are there religious groups who state that traditions are authoritative as much as Revelation?
5. Should we condemn all religious tradition as wrong?
6. When tradition and Revelation contradict, what is indicated? (Galatians 2:11-14)
  
7. Did Jesus ever keep any traditions of the Jews? (Luke 4:16)
8. In what four possible ways is the word “tradition” used in the Bible?
  - a) Gal. 1:14 \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13 \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - c) Colossians 2:8 \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; 1 Corinthian 11:2 \_\_\_\_\_
9. Can tradition be used acceptably in carrying out the Will of God? (Luke 4:16)
10. Does such custom become the authority or merely the means of carrying out the Will of God?
11. Why did Jesus condemn the Pharisees concerning their traditions? (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13)
12. How would you classify the following:  
Revelation or Tradition
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Type of building we use in which to worship?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Song director?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Invitation song?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Baptize people?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Two worship services on Sunday?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Bible Classes for all ages?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Mid-Week Bible Classes?
13. What dangers can you see that we need to avoid concerning traditions?

## Lesson Five

**“OPINION AND REVELATION”**

In a Bible discussion with another person one often hears this statement: “That is your opinion, and I have my opinion.” This may be another way of saying: “I value my opinion, but yours is worthless.” To reject another’s opinion and value one’s own opinion certainly shows where the worth is placed!

But in a Bible discussion, should one be concerned about each other’s opinions or what the Bible is saying? Should one have an opinion and then go to the Bible to find some kind of even “far-fetched” support for it? To most sincere religious people the answers are obvious to both questions.

The problem that most religious people have is trying to make a distinction between what is Faith (Revelation) and what is Opinion.

**DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN FAITH AND OPINION**

During the Restoration Movement came a motto that gave recognition to this problem that would face religious people: **“In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; and in all things, love.”** They recognized the right of each person to hold to what opinions he so pleased, but also recognized that the person must not attempt to teach or to enforce them upon others, or make them a test of fellowship of God’s people. As long as opinions were kept distinct from matters of faith (Revelation) and did not become authoritative, they could do no harm. From their writings it was obvious that they strongly felt the need to keep these two concepts very distinct.

**Faith defined:** It is something to be taught, believed and practiced. It is the belief of facts presented based on strong evidence (Hebrews 11:1). It is the reception of Divine testimony. Faith must be based on reliable testimony (John 20:30-31; Romans 10:17). The strength of faith is determined by the clarity of the testimony and one’s willingness to accept it. Faith is based on the things that God has spoken (Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3; 1 Peter 4:11).

**Opinion defined:** A view held in the mind, but done so without sufficient evidence or testimony to give certainty....that is, there is no clear Scriptural statement to be found to prove or uphold the view. Opinions are inferences of human reason in respect of things not actually treated in Scripture, or conclusions from insufficient data, or conjectures in regard to matters not clearly revealed. They are usually speculations! That which a man thinks but does not know. Speculation that is built on probable evidence. It is neither knowledge or faith!

**An example to illustrate the difference:** In John 21:22, Jesus’ reply to Peter when he asked what about the apostle John, what will happen to him, was: *“If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.”* From this statement a saying spread among the brethren

that John would not die. Verse 23 makes it very clear that one was a matter of Revelation (Faith) and the other was an opinion based on insufficient evidence.

A person may believe that the city of Leningrad exists, not because he has been there, but based on reliable testimony of one who has been there. One may hold the opinion that the city of Bombay, India, has a population of 1,000,000 people. It is an opinion because it is not based on proper data or evidence or reliable testimony. Paul stated that he had a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:1-7). One may hold that his “thorn in the flesh” was failing eyesight or several other possibilities. But it is merely an opinion that he holds for there is not sufficient information revealed to know for a certainty what it was.

A distinction is made in the Roman letter that helps to illustrate the difference between matters of faith and matters of opinion.

1. **Romans 14:1-6.** One man’s opinion was that he should not eat meat. But another man’s opinion was that he could eat meat. Whether a man ate meat or not was of no consequence, for neither was a matter of Revelation. Both were to receive each other in the faith. But, if a person began advocating that it was a sin to eat meat and tried to bind that on others, he became a false teacher, having departed from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-5).
2. **Romans 16:17-18.** When a man does not stay “in the faith” and preach according to Revelation, he then is to be Marked!

Until a proper recognition is given to making a distinction between faith and opinion, religious unity and peace is an impossibility. Congregations of God’s people must come to recognize the difference between them also if they are to live in peace with one another. For one to walk by his opinions rather than by faith (Revelation) is to invalidate the Word of God as an authoritative and infallible and complete guide (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Paul warned Timothy in his second letter, verse 23, “....**foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.**” There is a big difference in preaching one’s opinions and preaching the Faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

## **DANGERS TO AVOID**

To have opinions about things is not sinful! But there is a danger in connection to holding opinions that must be guarded against. The following four areas can illustrate the dangers to avoid:

1. **To reduce Faith into Opinion.** To take a command of God and put it into the category of just being someone’s opinion is wrong! Upon one occasion the chief priests and elders came

asking Jesus by what authority he was doing the things that he did. He turned and asked them a question about the baptism of John. They were afraid to answer him. He then rebuked them by saying that the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of God because they responded to the preaching of John, but they could not enter because they rejected John’s

baptism. Why? Because they took a Revelation from God and looked upon it as just a man's opinion! (Matthew 21:31-32).

2. **To exalt Opinion into Faith.** To take one's conclusions, his speculations, his own ideas and proclaim them as though they were the Revelation of God. To urge, teach, and to persuade others to accept one's opinions as though they were the message of God. It is to make a Law where God has not made one! Colossians 2:20-23 warns of allowing men to bind their "ideas" upon us as though they were from God. A person has the right to his opinions, but he must not attempt to enforced them upon others or make them a test of fellowship. To teach opinion as though it was Faith is to become a factionist, a divisive person.
3. **To hold to Erroneous Opinions.** Liberty of opinions does not allow for our believing or practicing things that are contrary to plain teaching of Scriptures. To hold that there is no resurrection of the dead, as some did at Corinth (1 Corinthians 15:2), is wrong! It is wrong because it is contrary to Revelation that states there will be a resurrection from the dead (John 5:28-29). It is the process of substituting human wisdom for Divine wisdom. It is to hold a view that is in contradiction to what God has stated. He thus becomes a disbeliever, because he refuses to believe what God says and chooses to hold to his opinion. If he advocates his false views, he becomes a false teacher and is to be marked (Romans 16:17-18) as such.
4. **Allowing Opinions to disrupt the peace, unity, and fellowship of the church.** As long as opinions are kept private and are not advocated as tests of fellowship, they should pose no real threat to the unity of God's people. Romans 14:19 states, after discussing the holding of opinions, that efforts should be made to follow after the things which make for peace, and things that edify or build up one another.

It is one thing to recognize the need for making a distinction between Faith and Opinion and possibly another to know which is what! The following lessons will attempt to help make this distinction more clearly defined.

### Questions for Discussion

1. **What is the motto that came out of the Restoration Movement that showed the need to make a distinction between faith and opinion?**
  
2. **How would you define Faith? (Jude 3, Ephesians 4:4-5; Romans 10:17)**
  
3. **How would you define Opinion? (Romans 14:1-7; 1 Corinthians 8:8)**
  
4. **Give an illustration to show the difference. (John 21:22-23)**
  
5. **How does Romans 14:1-7 and Romans 16:17-18 illustrate the difference?**
  
6. **What are four dangers to avoid in dealing with Opinions?**
  - a) **Matthew 21:31-32** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b) **Colossians 2:20-23** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c) **1 Corinthians 15:12** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d) **Romans 14:19** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
7. **What is so important about making a clear-cut distinction between Faith and Opinion?**
  - a) **Colossians 2:8** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b) **1 Timothy 6:4** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c) **2 Timothy 2:14** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson Six

**"CREEDS AND REVELATION"**

Religious activity is usually based upon religious beliefs of a person. But the origination of his beliefs can be either from human or divine means. This study is about the need for letting God be our authority in religion through His Inspired Revelation. But it is one thing to profess that the Bible is our authority and another thing for it to be the authority in reality. When man begins to change God's Revelation to suit what man wants to believe and do—the Bible is no longer the authority for him. This is the grave danger of "Creeds" of men, in that they do not stop with just expressing what the Scriptures are plainly teaching, but usually go beyond and change it to their liking. The fact that there are so many different creeds of churches should make this an obvious fact! This is what the Jewish leaders did to God's Old Covenant to the Israelite nation—they set aside God's command and put their own ideas in its place (Matthew 15:1-9).

Several major attempts have been made through the centuries to express in an organized or systematic way what men felt must be believed to be right with God. When these efforts are adopted by a conclave of a religious group, they become the official "Creed" of the church. The earlier attempts were in a more simple form and have been retained through the centuries by most religious groups. These attempts were: **The Apostles Creed; The Nicene Creed, and The Athanasian Creed.** With the coming of the Reformation efforts during the 16th Century and the breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church, differing creeds were drafted by various groups of men and resulted in the formation of several major religious denominations. Some of the adopted creeds during that time were: **The Augsburg Confession, The Genevese Confession, The Degrees of Dort, The Heidelberg Catechism, The 39 Articles of the Church of England, and The Westminster Confession of Faith.** The earlier creeds expressed in simple terms the basic beliefs of Christianity, with an emphasis upon the triune nature of Deity. The Reformation creeds retained most of these concepts, but added *"special articles designed to emphasize and safeguard the distinctive doctrines and ecclesiastical positions of particular branches of the church"* ("Creeds," I.S.B.E., Vol. II, p. 104). The differing creeds coming out of the Reformation Movement became the great stumblingblock of the unity of those professing to believe in Christ. During the Restoration Movement, this truth became more obvious to the men who were advocating, **"No Creed but Christ."** Their efforts were unrelenting in advocating a discarding of all such creeds of men and go back to only the teachings of the Holy Spirit, recorded in the New Covenant Scriptures. Alexander Campbell, one of the Restoration preachers, expressed this concept very strongly in the following words: **"He that advocates the necessity of creeds of human contrivance to the unity of the church unconsciously impeaches the wisdom of God, arraigns the benevolence of the Savior, and censures the revelation of the Spirit."** ("The Ancient Order of Things," THE CHRISTIAN BAPTIST, Vol. II, p. 133).

## CREEDS OF MEN

Creeds of men are a statement of what they believe is correct before God. But they obviously go beyond that to the point of saying one **must** believe these things in order to be accepted as a member of their religious group. The more creeds that are drawn up and adopted as official, the more churches there will be as a result. But the only reason for drawing up additional creeds is to state a belief or beliefs that are different from the original creed; thus, indicating that someone has deviated from the original teachings of Christ to something else (Galatians 1:6-9). This is easily seen in a brief study of how creeds have originated (a lengthy study in itself).

## CREEDS versus REVELATION

Creeds are not objected to from the standpoint of a person expressing what he believes. This is the right of every person to do so. Objection comes from three main areas of thought:

1. The attempt to bind such statements of belief upon others as though it were the Word of God itself;
2. The divisive effect that such creeds have had upon the religious world in separating sincere men and women from a common fellowship in Christ;
3. The effort on the part of a man or group of men to "play God" by giving "divine oracles" to be believed and followed, rather than letting the Word of God be that authority—and the only authority in religion.

If official creeds of men state only what the Word of God states, they are really not needed—for it has already been stated! If creeds of men state something contrary to the Revealed Will of God, then they are false and need to be rejected as the work of men. Jesus condemned such actions on the part of religious leaders in His day who were binding their ideas as Law and making God's Law void on the subject (Matthew 15:1-9).

Faith or belief is important because without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). But it is also important "what" a person believes as well, for only the truth can give man freedom (John 8:32). It is important that men turn to the Word of God and abide in it and it alone (2 John 9; 1 Peter 4:11) rather than to a group of men who feel the necessity of fostering upon unsuspecting people their own peculiar ideas contrary to plain teaching of Scripture. In the words of Isaiah: ***"to the Law and to the Testimonies: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"*** (8:20). Men have devised many ways to foster upon unlearned people their human laws and present them as the Laws of God. Following is a list of some of those ways:

1. Give a word in Scripture a different meaning than the Scripture intended.
2. Make the figurative, literal.
3. Make the literal, figurative.
4. Take a long-standing tradition and preach it as a command.
5. Teach with great authority, piety, and charisma that something is from God without any real Biblical proof whatever.
6. Take a non-universal command and teach it as a universal command.
7. Take a command that involves a custom or a cultural matter and preach it as a general command.
8. Take a command from the Old Covenant and preach it as a command for men today.

9. Claim to have received a direct revelation from God.
10. Take part of what the Scriptures teach about some subject while ignoring the rest of what the Scriptures teach about it.
11. Mistranslate the Scriptures.
12. Misinterpret the Scriptures.

The believer must not be ashamed or unwilling to express his belief privately or publicly (1 Peter 3:15). But at the same time, he must be able to show clearly and plainly from the Scriptures that such is taught by God's Word. If such cannot be shown to be clearly taught in Scripture, then the teaching should be rejected as the teaching of men!

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

We have looked at four areas that have a tendency to crowd out the Word of God as the Religious Authority for men today: Reason, Tradition, Opinion, Creeds. It is important for the believer in Christ to be sure that what he is believing and practicing is from God and not from men. Satan is still alive and active and working to delude, deceive, and lead men astray from God. The purpose of these four lessons, in particular, is to make us aware of the dangerous areas where Satan leads believers astray.

The remainder of the lessons to follow will be dealing with how one is able to be sure of Bible Authority for all he believes and practices.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. **From where did religious beliefs and practices originate before God gave a revelation to man?**
2. **After He gave His Revelation to man, why did man feel the need to draw up creeds?**
3. **List some of the earlier attempts at drawing up a universally acceptable creed.**
4. **List some of the creeds that came out of the Reformation Movement.**
5. **Why object to the drawing up of creeds by men? (Galatians 1:6-9; Matthew 15:1-9)**
6. **Why is it important what a person believes and practices? (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:32; 2 John 9; 1 Peter 4:11; Isaiah 8:20)**
7. **List some ways men can disguise human laws as divine laws?**
8. **Should the believer be ashamed or unwilling to express his belief privately or publicly? (1 Peter 3:15)**
  9. **What is so important to realize from these last four lessons?**

Lesson Seven

## “THE GENERIC AND SPECIFIC NATURE OF COMMANDS”

All Authority resides in God! He is the one that has the right to command and expect obedience to that command. He has the power to bless those who obey and the power to punish those who disobey. To be right with God, we must go to His Word to find what He has commanded of us, and then do it! Not to do so is **SIN**! Sin is a transgression of God’s Law (1 John 3:4).

### HOW DOES GOD COMMAND?

The methods of commanding people can be accomplished in various ways, but they need to be obeyed in whatever form they are expressed. The following Scriptures help to illustrate the various ways of God expressing His Will to us:

1. **By a direct mandate. (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 16:31)**
2. **By expressing a desire. (Romans 6:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 3:5)**
3. **By a conditional statement. (Colossians 3:1)**
4. **By exhortation. (Hebrews 4:15-16)**
5. **By a question. (Romans 6:1-2; James 2:14-24)**
6. **By a declarative statement. (Mark 16:15-16)**
7. **By a prohibition. (Romans 13:9)**

### SPECIAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT COMMANDS

It is generally thought that all that God commands is binding upon all people today. However, a distinction needs to be made between the two major covenants and the commands under each. The Jews are no longer under that Old Covenant and Gentiles never were. Mankind is to come under the New Covenant given through Christ for men today (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Commands are usually given in a universal sense. However, some commands are not universal in nature. The following observations need to be studied closely so that confusion will not result in misunderstanding the intent of certain commands.

**Some commands do not apply to all people universally.** When a select group of persons are singled out, that command usually only applies to them directly. Examples: **Elders** (Acts 20:28); **Older men** (Titus 2:2); **Older women** (Titus 2:3); **Younger women** (Titus 2:4); **Servants** (Titus 2:9); **Wives** (Colossians 3:18); **Husbands** (Colossians 3:19); **Fathers** (Colossians 3:21); **Masters** (Colossians 4:1); **Evangelists** (2 Timothy 4:2, 5); **Apostles** (Acts 1:4-5); **Sinners** (Acts 2:38); etc.

**Some commands were binding at the time given, but would not be binding today.** The limited commission given to the apostles by Jesus would illustrate this (Matthew 10:5-15). Also, the command to desire earnestly the miraculous spiritual gifts do not apply today since they ceased in the first century (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13).

**Some commands may be universal in nature, but certain persons may not be able to obey them.** Small children who are incapable of understanding would not be able to obey. A retarded person may not be capable of understanding or obeying a command of God. A person who is unable to sin because he cannot speak would be an example also. The sick person who is unable to attend the worship assemblies would not be disobedient to God if he missed. Jesus used the illustration of an ox in the ditch that could be gotten out on the Sabbath without breaking the Law of the Sabbath. This illustrates that in some special instances a universal command may not be obeyed, and still be right with God.

Universal commands can be given to all non-Christians without distinction. Universal commands can be also given to all Christians without distinction. These commands apply across the board to all Christians or Non-Christians.

## COMMANDS ARE BOTH GENERIC AND SPECIFIC IN NATURE

It is important to realize that every command is both **generic** and **specific** in nature. The following illustrations will hopefully help to make this concept clear.

1. **“Son, go get some fruit.”** “Go” is **specific** in contrast to “staying,” but is **generic** in that it did not give **specifics** of how the son should go. So, the son is to go, anyway he wants to go, as long as he goes! “Fruit” is **specific** in contrast to vegetables, but is **generic** in that it did not give the kind of fruit wanted. So, the son can get any kind of fruit he so chooses, as long as he gets fruit! If the command had been, **“Son, go get some apples,”** then, **“apples”** would have been required! To be obedient, the son must get apples, not some other kind of fruit.
2. **Noah was commanded of God: “Make thee an ark of gopher wood...”** To **“build an ark”** is **specific** in contrast to building a house, a temple, etc., but it is **generic** in that it did not give the details on what kind of tools, frame-work, where to be build, etc. Thus, Noah could use his own judgment in regard to these things. God did **specify** some things for Noah: build an Ark; build it out of gopher wood; rooms are to be in the Ark; pitch is to be used to seal its seams within and without; the length, breadth and height are specified, etc. The **generic** nature of the command allowed Noah to use hammers and saws to build the Ark, even though they are not specifically mentioned. And, even though God did not tell Noah not to use other kinds of wood, He did tell him what kind of wood to use....and that was what God wanted!
3. **The Christian is commanded to observe the “Lord’s Supper.”** (1 Corinthians 11:23-24). The command is **specific** in contrast to a common meal, but it is **generic** in the sense that no details are commanded in regards to: how many cups, how many pieces of bread, what time to observe it during the services. Etc. These things are left up to the congregation’s judgment. There are some **specifics** involved in this command: unleavened bread and fruit of the vine were used by Jesus in giving the command; the Christian is to examine himself to take the Supper in a worthy manner; it is to be taken on the first day of the week. Etc.
4. **The Christian is commanded to Sing.** (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). “Singing” is **specific** in contrast to other kinds of activities: dancing, cooking, partying, playing, etc., but it is **generic** in the sense that all details are not given in regards to singing, such as: the use of a song book, pitch pipe, song leader, etc. “Singing” **specifies** the kind of music that God wants. To whistle, hum, or use instruments in worship is not authorized. When God **specifies** what He wants, that is what He wants!
5. **Penitent Believers are to be baptized.** (Acts 2:38) God **specified** that He wanted the penitent believer to be baptized (immersed) in contrast to other actions. But the command is also **generic** in that it did not **specify** where to baptize a person, or how deep the water had to be. In order to carry out the command, it infers that there had to be enough water to “immerse” the person. God also **specified** who was to be baptized: “a penitent believer.” When God **specifies** what He wants, then that is what man should do!

## CONCLUSION

It is important to watch in the context of a command to see its **generic** and **specific** nature in order to know the how, when, and what of carrying out of a command. Be sure you understand the following two points:

1. **The generic nature of a command** authorizes an action, but does not give the details of carrying it out. Judgment has to be used in order to carry it out. This judgment may be one of several ways to do a thing. When a command is **generic** in nature, we don’t need a “thus-sayeth-the-Lord” for the means, methods, aids, manners, and modes to be used in obeying that command. We have the liberty to carry out a **generic** command in any expedient way that is not elsewhere prohibited or **specified**.

2. **The specific nature of a command** authorizes an action, but tells how it is to be done. It must be done this way and only this way. When God gives the **specifics** in regards to the means, methods, aids, manners, etc., then we are obligated to use what He has **specifically** commanded.

**THE COMMANDS OF GOD SHOULD BE RESPECTED,  
BELIVED AND OBEYED AS GIVEN!**

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Where there is no authority religiously, what do people do? (Judges 17:6; 2 Peter 2:19; 2 Corinthians 2:5).
2. How would you define authority?
3. How does God exercise His authority over mankind? (John 14:15)
4. In what various forms do “commands” come to man in the Bible?
  - a) Acts 2:38 \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:5 \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Colossians 3:1 \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) Hebrews 4:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_
  - e) Romans 6:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_
  - f) Mark 16:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_
  - g) Romans 13:9 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are all commands in the Bible binding on us today?
6. How would you define a “generic” command?
7. When is man’s judgment allowed in regards to God’s commands?
8. How would you define a “specific” command?
9. Can commands be both generic and specific at the same time? (illustrate)
10. Would it be sinful to use individual cups in partaking of the fruit of the vine?

## Lesson Eight

# “THE EXCLUSIVE NATURE OF COMMANDS”

If one accepts the Bible to be the “Word of God,” then he ought to go by it as Authority. There is no use having a Bible if its precepts are ignored. But time has to be spent in understanding that God’s precepts are both **inclusive** and **exclusive**. That which God commands is **inclusive**, but there is an **exclusiveness** involved in commands as well.

In the previous lesson emphasis was given to showing the differences between the **generic** and **specific** nature of commands. The **exclusiveness** of a command is seen in its **specific** nature. God can command something to be done, but does not have to give a long list of “thou shalt nots” for us to know not to do them. The **specific** nature of the command becomes **exclusive** of everything else!

Departures from the Word of God have mostly come in this area of thinking. Man has gone “*onward and abode not in the doctrine of Christ.*” Everything from Popes to Instrumental Music in worship has come into religious practice under the guise of human liberty, but in reality are additions to what God has given; and thus, have no authority for such. Psalms 19:13 speaks of the great transgression that the writer wanted to avoid. That “great transgression” was the sin of presumption. It is to presume that God’s mercy will overlook our willful failures to do His Will or our doing things that He has not legislated. What is taking place is the substituting of man’s will and wish for God’s Will. This is at the very heart of all rebellion against God. The real issue is, does man respect the Authority of God? If he does, then he will do and only do that which God commands!

## EXAMPLES OF THE EXCLUSIVE NATURE OF COMMANDS

While the above terminology may not be as clear at first; yet, all of this is merely a common sense approach to how we communicate. Examples following will illustrate.

1. **Noah was to build the Ark of gopher wood.** (Genesis 6:14). All other kinds of wood were automatically eliminated (excluded) by the command to build it out of gopher wood. If God had later on added another kind of wood to the first command, then only two kinds of wood would have been acceptable.
2. **God has given certain activities by which He is to be worshipped.** Singing, praying, giving, observing the Lord’s Supper, teaching God’s Word are those activities that God has proscribed. To do His bidding, we must do what He commands and not attempt to worship Him by things of man’s devising. Collectively, they become exclusive.
3. **God has commanded Singing.** (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). If this had been the only command that God had given as an avenue of worship to Him, then this command would have been exclusive; no other activities could be engaged in to worship God acceptably.

The one single command would exclude all other activities. But the command to sing is also exclusive in another sense. It is also excluding any other kind or way of making music to God. God specified the kind of music that He wanted. He did not have to give a list of “thou shalt nots” for us to realize that other kinds of music would be an addition to God’s command. A preacher tried an experiment with his 7-year-old daughter. He offered to play the game “Simon says.” The one important rule in the game is, you must do only what Simon says! If you do something that Simon doesn’t say, you are out of the game. He told her to sing a certain song. She did it. He told her to go and play on the piano. She did it. She never once confused the commands. If a 7-year-old child can understand the principle, why can’t adults?

<b>Generic Command</b> -----	<b>Worship God</b>
<b>Specific Commands</b> -----	<b>Singing</b>
	<b>Praying</b>
	<b>Giving</b>
	<b>Study</b>
	<b>Communion</b>
	<b><u>EXCLUDED:</u></b>

- 1. Instrumental Music
- 2. Whistling Music
- 3. Humming Music
- 4. Drums Music

- 1. Dancing as Worship
- 2. Playing as Worship
- 3. Counting Beads as Worship
- 4. Lighting Candles as Worship

**Excludes all other KINDS of Music**

**Excludes all other KINDS of Worship**

### **THE SILENCE OF SCRIPTURES**

Some religious writers use the expression, “The Law of Silence”, in discussing the concept of **exclusiveness** of commands. The idea being that a rule of language understanding involves a question not only of what is stated, but what is not stated as well. Examples are used in the Scriptures to help illustrate the part that **silence** plays in a proper understanding of commands. Following are two examples to illustrate the principle:

- 1. **Hebrews 7:13-14.** Jesus is identified as a priest after the order of Melchizedek because He could not be a priest after the order of Aaron or the Levitical priesthood. The reason given by the writer of Hebrews is that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi. The point being made is: (1) God spoke and said that priest were to come from the tribe of Levi; (2) Since He didn’t say that priest could come from any other tribe, then the command is exclusive. Priest

can only come from the tribe of Levi. God didn't have to say, "Thou shalt not make priests out of people from other tribes." It was understood!

2. **Hebrews 1:5.** The writer argues for the special relationship of Jesus to the Father. He is called the Son of God, which means that He is Deity. The writer points out a quotation to that effect and then argues that God did not say this about angels. Thus, in the absence of any such statement, Jesus is uniquely the Son of God!

Many other examples could be used in the Old Testament to show that God did not speak and say "not to," but when He gave a command that became **exclusive**. God's command not only tell us what He does want, it also tells us what He does not want! To go beyond the bounds of God's Law is sin (1 John 3:4; 2 John 9; Deuteronomy 4:2; 1 Peter 4:11). The special place that **silence** plays in the **exclusiveness** of commands is---where a command is given and no other is given that adds to the idea, the silence of any other commands in the same area of thought makes the one command exclusive in nature.

What God has not authorized cannot be a matter of faith, for faith comes by hearing what God has spoken (authorized)(Romans 10:17). The principle stated by Balaam in Numbers 22:18 should be much heeded today: ***"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more."*** Man must not go beyond the bounds of God's Law. An important example has been given us in the Old Testament to illustrate this concept. Nadab and Abihu were priests officiating in the Temple. They offered strange fire (Leviticus 10:1-7) before God and were killed on the spot by God. They had been told where to secure the fire (the brazen altar in the outer court---Leviticus 6:8-13). God did not have to tell them where not to get the fire. Any fire from any other source would not have been acceptable!

### **RESTORATION SLOGAN**

A Slogan came out of the Restoration Movement that is often confused with the above concepts. The slogan is: **"We speak where the Bible speaks; and are silent where the Bible is silent."** What was meant by this slogan was: (1) We are to command what the Scriptures command, and not command what they do not command; (2) We bind only what the Scriptures bind, and do not bind what they do not bind (Numbers 24:13; Ezekiel 22:28; Deuteronomy 4:2; Matthew 15:7-9). The slogan was guarding against the grave dangers of: (1) Not teaching things God has commanded (Matthew 23:23); (2) or, to bind human laws upon man that God hasn't bound (Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:8; 2:20-23; Titus 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 4:6). Where the Scriptures speak, we have obligations; but where the Scriptures are silent, we must be silent also. We do not legislate for God!

### **THE SPECIAL NATURE OF EXCLUSIVENESS**

What determines the exclusiveness of a single command is whether another command in the same area has been added to it. If there are none, then it is exclusive as a command in that area. If there are others, then they collectively become exclusive in that area. The following illustrations will help to make clear what is involved.

**Man must believe to be saved!** (John 3:16). Is this command exclusive? Has God given any other commands for man to do that involves his salvation? If not, then only faith is necessary for man to do. If there are other commands, then the command to believe to be saved is not exclusive. Obviously, more are given! (1) Men must repent to be saved (Acts 3:19); (2) Men must confess Christ to be saved (Romans 10:9-10); and (3) Men must be baptized (immersed) to be saved (Acts 2:38). While no one of these commands excludes the others; yet, collectively, they become exclusive of any other things beyond them!

**Man is to worship God!** (John 4:24). In what activities is man to worship God? If only one activity is commanded, then it becomes exclusive of all other activities. If five activities are given, then the five collectively become exclusive of other activities.

**God commanded man to sing!** (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). If He also commanded man to Whistle, to Hum, to Play on Instruments, then Singing would not be exclusive of the other items. But if He commanded Singing and did not add any other commands to be done in this area of music, then Singing is exclusive!

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PRINCIPLE**

It may be hard to “over-stress” the importance of this principle of understanding the Bible. Most of the problems in the religious world come from a failure to respect this principle. So many examples are given in the Old Testament that illustrate this principle that it must have seemed important to God also. But this principle is easily illustrated in everyday life as well. The following examples might help to further understand the importance of this principle.

- 1. King Saul, a Benjamite,** understood the concept enunciated in this lesson. However, he “forced himself” to act as a priest and offered sacrifice to God, which only priest were to do. Because of his action, he lost the kingdom (1 Samuel 13:8-14).
- 2. King Uzziah, a Judahite,** attempted to fulfill a priestly function by burning incense in the Temple. Azariah and 80 other priests withstood him and said, ***“It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense.....Go out of the sanctuary; for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God.”*** (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). God smote Uzziah with leprosy, and he remained a leper for the rest of his life. No excuse existed for what he did. He might have said, “But God hasn’t said I can’t serve as a priest.” But he didn’t, for he knew he was wrong!  
He acted without authority from God and against the authority of God who commanded priest to attend to the activities in the Temple. God’s command was automatically exclusive of any one else officiating in the Temple.
- 3. A physician writes a prescription for his patient.** He states on the prescription the kind of medication desired. He does not have to say, “Do not give them other kinds of medications.” That is automatically understood. The druggists understands what the physician wants without having to be told all the kinds he doesn’t want.

The importance of this principle is further illustrated in areas where God has not spoken, but the exclusiveness is clearly understood. Evaluate the following examples.

**Suppose someone among us should attempt to make himself head of the church.** Is the Bible silent about the matter? If not, where is the verse that prohibits a man from functioning in this capacity? It cannot be found. Then, why should such be objected to? Because the Bible clearly states that Jesus is “the head” of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). That automatically excludes angels or humans.

**Suppose some should attempt to bind a hierarchy upon the church.** Where is the Biblical teaching to keep it from being done. The teaching is there, but it does not appear in the form of a prohibition. Rather, it can be found in God’s positive declarations as to what He wants done. His having specified local churches with bishops and deacons (Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23) excludes a church organization overseen by a hierarchy unknown to the New Testament.

**Is it Biblical to pray to God through Mary, the mother of Jesus?** The answer is no, but where is the verse that prohibits it? The verse that states that there is only one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). All other Mediators are excluded.

**Is the Bible silent on infant baptism?** Surely, the command to baptize believers (Mark 16:16) excludes atheists, horses, fence-posts, and infants. Our opposition is not based upon a prohibition, but exclusion.

## CONCLUSION

To abandon this principle of understanding of the Bible is to go against common sense, as well as Scripture teaching, and would open the flood-gates to all kinds of devices of man. We must not reject or abandon this fundamental and necessary principle of understanding the Bible.

## Questions for Discussion

1. **In what sense are commands exclusive?**
2. **What is the underlying spirit of the sin of presumption? (Psalms 19:13; 1 Samuel 15:23)**
3. **Illustrate the exclusive nature of commands:**
  - a) **Genesis 6:14** \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) **Ephesians 5:19** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Illustrate the concept of the “silence of Scriptures.”**
  - a) **Hebrews 7:13-14** \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) **Hebrews 1:5** \_\_\_\_\_
5. **Were Nadab and Abihu told not to get the fire they used from any other place? (Leviticus 10:1-7; 6:8-13).**
6. **Explain the slogan: “We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent.”**
  - a) **Matthew 23:23** \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) **Matthew 15:9** \_\_\_\_\_
7. **In what sense does a command become exclusive? (Illustrate with John 3:16; Acts 3:19; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38)**
8. **Why is this principle so important? (Illustrate with 2 Chronicles 26:16-21).**

**Upon what basis would it be right to oppose having a Pope over the Lord’s church?**

## COMMANDS

GENERIC COMMANDS	ALLOWABLE	SPECIFIC COMMANDS	RESTRICTED
<b>Matt. 4:10</b> “Thou Shalt Worship”	<b>Idols, Men, or God</b>	<b>“Worship God”</b>	<b>Only God!</b>
<b>Gen. 6:14</b> “Build an Ark”	<b>Any kind of Material</b>	<b>“Build Ark of Gopher Wood”</b>	<b>Only Gopher Wood</b>
<b>2 Kgs. 5:10</b> “Naaman to dip 7 times in water”	<b>Any stream, lake or pool</b>	<b>“Dip in Jordan”</b>	<b>Only Jordan River</b>
<b>1 Peter 4:16</b> “Glorify God in a name”	<b>Any name can be used</b>	<b>“Glorify God in name Christian”</b>	<b>Only in name Christian</b>
<b>Matt. 26:26-29</b> “Eat & Drink in memory of Jesus’ death”	<b>Any kind of food &amp; drink can be used</b>	<b>“Eat this bread &amp; drink this fruit of vine”</b>	<b>Only bread &amp; fruit of vine</b>
<b>Eph. 5:19</b> “Make music to God”	<b>Any kind of music</b>	<b>“Sing and make melody in heart”</b>	<b>Only sing &amp; make melody in heart</b>

## Lesson Nine

## “IMPLICATIONS & INFERENCES OF COMMANDS”

God directs our lives by commands. These commands are issued in various ways, but all are understood to be the Will of God for our lives. Commands are not only **generic** and **specific**, but they are also **exclusive** in nature. But commands also **infer** or **imply** some things in the very nature of the command. This is our study in this lesson. We want to understand what is meant by an **inference** from a command and see some examples to illustrate the concept clearly.

### INFERENCE, IMPLICATIONS, DEDUCTIONS

The above three terms are consistently used in this area of study to describe a logical process of arriving at what God wants His people to believe and do. Following is an attempt to define and illustrate each concept.

**1. Inference.** To draw a conclusion based on premises or evidence. To illustrate:

Premise #1—A square has 4 equal sides.

Premise #2—One side is 4 inches long.

Conclusions inferred: (1) Each of the other 3 sides are 4 inches long too.

(2) The total perimeter is 16 inches.

Premise #1—All men everywhere are called upon to repent (Acts 17:30-31).

Premise #2—I am a man.

Conclusion inferred—Therefore, I must repent!

**2. Implication.** An explicit command is expressed in so many words, but that which is implied is not stated in so many words. To illustrate:

Premise #1—All men are to repent and be baptized to be saved. Acts 2:38

Premise #2—I am a man who needs to be saved (Romans 3:23).

Implied—That this command is for me to do, even though it did not mention my name in the command given.

**3. Deduction.** The drawing of conclusions by reasoning from generals to particulars. To illustrate:

Premise #1—We have two boards of equal length.

Premise #2—One of the boards is 3 feet long.

Deduced from evidence—(1) Both boards are 3 feet long.

(2) The total length of both boards is 6 feet.

Premise #1—Josiah was 8 years old when he began to reign. (2 Chronicles 34:1)

Premise #2—Josiah reigned for 31 years in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 34:1)

Deduced from evidence—Josiah was 39 years old when he died!

Conclusions drawn from commands or statements of facts must be reached by sound, logical reasoning---not assumptions or opinions of men. These conclusions must be based on facts or evidence, not what a person thinks it should be. A conclusion drawn must necessarily follow from the premises (facts or evidences) given in explicit terms.

God has given explicit statements in His word. But the explicit statements may infer or imply other facts that are truth also. These are **as much** God's truth as the expressed statements. In fact, our very acceptance of the Bible as a guide for us today is a process of implication, inference, or deduction. Since the Bible commands are not addressed to me personally, I must imply from what is said that God intended it to be for me even without having to use my name in the command. To illustrate:

1. The Great Commission was given to the apostles. (Matthew 28:18-20)
2. Upon what basis is it binding upon anyone today?
3. It has to be through the process of implication!

Thus, a sound rule of establishing Biblical authority has to involve the reasoning process known as **inference, implication, or deduction**. But it must be stated that this process must be the drawing of conclusions only as warranted by the facts or evidence!

### **BIBLE EXAMPLES WHERE SUCH IS INVOLVED**

Logical reasoning is often hindered in the lives of people by their prejudices or allowing their emotions to interfere with an intelligent conclusion. For this reason it is important to give enough illustrations of this process so that the reader can understand clearly what is expected of him.

1. **Genesis 13:1.** Lot accompanied Abraham. It is implied that Lot therefore went with Abraham into the South (Egypt).
2. **2 Chronicles 34:3.** Josiah was 8 years old when he began to reign (verse 1). In the 12<sup>th</sup> year of his reign he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem. How old was he when he began the process? If your answer was 20, you have drawn that by deduction because it was not explicitly stated.
3. **Matthew 3:16.** When Jesus was baptized by John, he afterward came up out of the water. It is implied that He went down into the water.
4. **1 Timothy 3:1, 4-5.** To be a bishop (elder), one is to be a man who rules his house well. It is therefore interred:
  - a) That a woman cannot be a bishop (elder).
  - b) That a young man cannot be a bishop (elder).

Neither of these statements are stated in the text, but they are implied or inferred.

5. **Acts 16:31-34.** The baptism of the Jailer's household does not infer infant baptism, because such is contrary to the facts stated. It states that Paul preached the Word of the Lord to all that was in the house. He also commanded that they all believe to be saved. After having been baptized, it stated that they had believed in God with all "his" house. The right deduction to draw would be that all in his house could hear, believe and obey the message!
6. **1 Corinthians 15:12-19.** This passage is filled with deductions drawn by Paul from the statement "There is no resurrection." These deductions are all correct because they are expressed by Divine Inspiration. But this does illustrate the validity of this reasoning process.
7. **Matthew 21:23-27.** Jesus made use of deduction or implication. He asked the religious leaders to draw a conclusion based on the facts of what they had seen and heard: "*John's baptism, is it from heaven or men?*"
8. **Luke 24:1, 13, 21.** The day Jesus appeared to the two men on the road to Emmaus was the third day since Jesus was crucified (verse 21). The day He appeared to them was on the first day of the week (verse 1). It was that same day (1<sup>st</sup> day of the week) that Jesus appeared to the two disciples (verse 13). What day was Jesus crucified on? If you answered "Friday," you had to get your answer from implication, because it is not stated!
9. **Jesus drew a valid deduction in Matthew 22:23-33.** He quotes a statement that says that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From that statement He deduces that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Therefore, they must be living in some sense after physical death!
10. **Special example to illustrate.** By looking at three accounts of conversions in the book of Acts we are faced with some questions.
  1. **The Philippian Jailer** was told to **believe** to be saved (Acts 16:31).
  2. **The Devout Jews** on Pentecost were told to **repent** and **be baptized** to have the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).
  3. **Saul of Tarsus**, after having seen the Lord, was later told to arise and **be baptized** so his sins could be washed away (Acts 22:16).

Please answer the following statements as either TRUE or FALSE:

True    False

- \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ 1. God requires different things for different persons to be saved (Acts 10:34-35)
- \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ 2. God requires the same thing for all men to be saved.
- \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ 3. It is inferred that all three did the same thing to be saved.

The conclusion that is drawn from the above must be in harmony with not only the stated facts in each of the accounts of conversion, but with the over-all teachings of Scripture. If our conclusion contradicts any of these other teachings, it must be a false conclusion. Truth is in complete harmony with itself!

## CONCLUSION

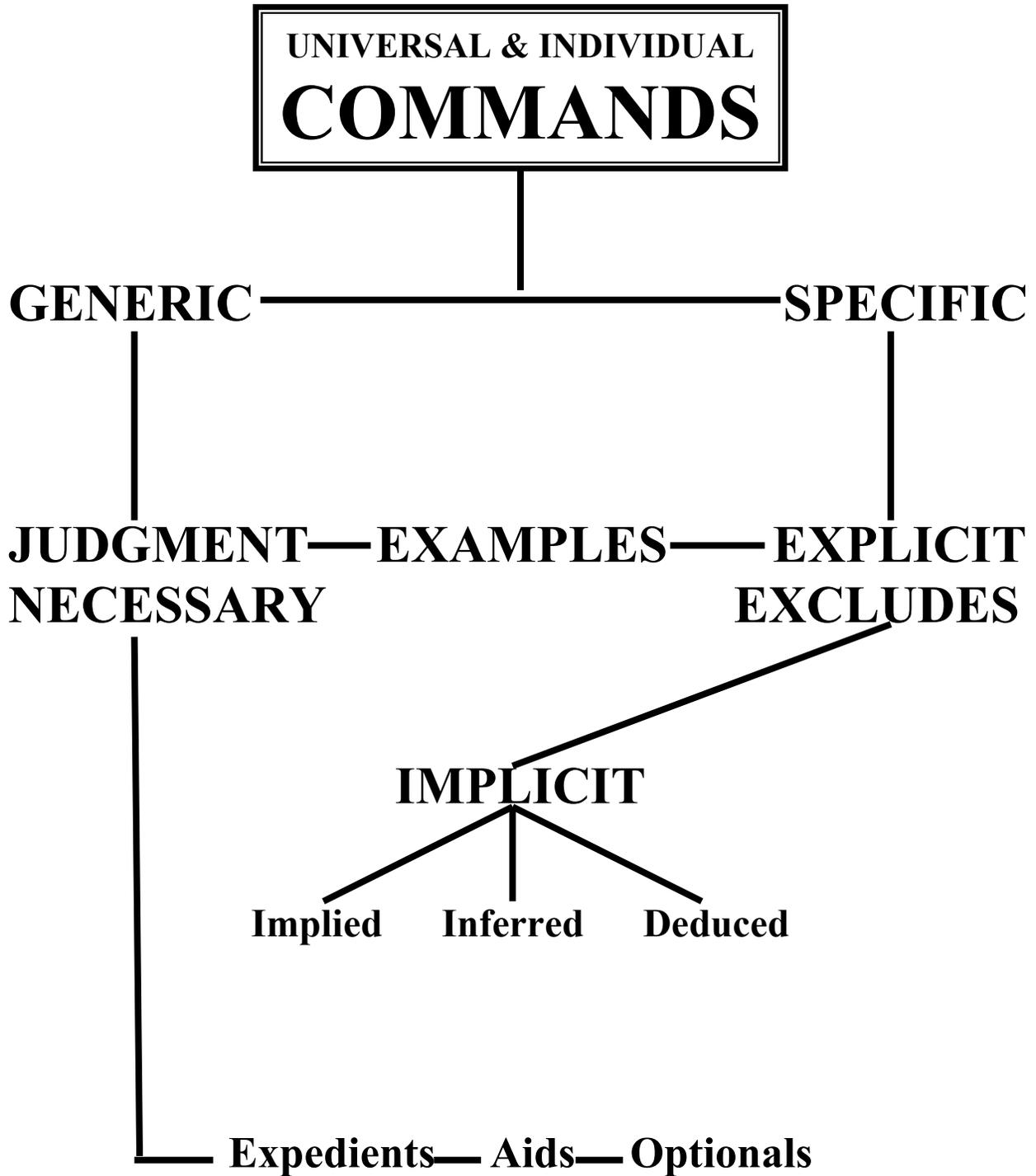
Truth cannot only be arrived at by explicit statements of facts, but truth can be equally inferred, implied, or deduced from those statement of facts,

Questions have been raised concerning the binding of deductions, implications, or inferences upon mankind as matters of faith. Several reasons are advanced for this reservation and one reason stands out among all the others. Concern is expressed about the dangers of drawing conclusions where man's reasoning process is involved because he has problems with correctness at times. Most of us can easily recognize the accuracy of such an observation, but at the same time we should not reject implied truths of God just because some don't accept them or draw the same conclusions. If this approach were taken, we would have to reject even explicit statements of Scripture because people do not accept them as they should.

It is important to recognize the dangers involved, but to be watchful of those dangers and not reject a legitimate process of arriving at God's Will for our lives. Assumptions are not to be accepted as from God, but are of men!

## Questions for Discussion

1. **Define the words explicit and implicit with regards to God's way of communicating to man.**
  - a) **Explicit---**
  - b) **Implicit---**
2. **Illustrate the concepts of Inference, Implications, and Deductions.**
  - a) **Inference---**
  - b) **Implications---**
  - c) **Deductions---**
3. **What are some things inferred by the command in John 4:24?**
4. **Does my name have to be mentioned in Scripture in order to know that the command is for me? (Acts 2:38)**
5. **What is the logical conclusion deducted from the following two statements?**
  - a) **All men are mortal.**
  - b) **Paul Cantrell is a man.**
  - c) **Therefore \_\_\_\_\_.**
6. **Did Jesus use the process of inference to teach? (Matt. 22:32)**
7. **Explain what is inferred in these New Testament commands:**
  - a) **Matt. 3:16---**
  - b) **1 Tim. 3:4-5---**
  - c) **Mark 16:15-16---**
  - d) **Acts 17:30---**
8. **How would you illustrate the difference between an inference and an assumption?**
  - a) **Matt. 3:16---**
  - b) **Acts 16:11-15---**
9. **How can inference show up a false doctrine? (John 3:16; Jas. 2:24)**



## Lesson Ten

# “THE VALUE OF RECORDED ACTIONS OF MEN”

A slogan arose during the Restoration Movement that advocated that Biblical Authority could be arrived at by three processes: (1) Commands of God; (2) A Necessary Inference (Implication); or (3) An Approved Example. The first two have already been discussed. The purpose of this lesson is to look at the third area and to evaluate its importance in establishing Biblical Authority.

Some clarification is necessary in terminology before proceeding further. The term above, “An Approved Example,” is often used by writers in the discussion of this question, but there is probably a better phrase that is more general in nature and allows for clearer distinctions to be made where such is necessary; and that term is: “Recorded Actions.” While there are literally hundreds of **recorded actions** in the New Testament, not all of them are significant to our discussion. Also, the very term, “Example,” leaves the impression of a recorded action that must be or should be followed. This is not necessarily true of **recorded actions** in the New Testament. The most obvious reason is that some actions are not to be followed because they are wrong and sinful. They are not wrong because they have been recorded in the Bible, but they are wrong because they go against the Will of God (Command of God). They merely illustrate in action that which is contrary to righteousness. There is another large segment of **recorded actions** in the New Testament that illustrates what would be considered approved by God.

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF BOTH GOOD AND BAD “RECORDED ACTIONS”

1. **Bad examples (recorded actions) not to be followed:** The context usually shows clearly that the **recorded event** is a bad one. But also, elsewhere there is usually a command of God (**explicit** or **implicit** statements) to the effect that that action is wrong.
  - a) Matthew 26:69-74—Peter’s denial of Jesus!
    - 1) Jesus had already stated that those who deny Him before men would be denied before His Father (Matthew 10:32-33).
    - 2) Peter’s actions were wrong....the context shows it and the prohibition of Jesus indicates it as well.
    - 3) And Peter knew it was wrong!!
  - a) Acts 5:1-11—Ananias and Sapphira lying to God about the money they gave.
    - 1) To lie is wrong.....whether to God or to man (Ephesians 4:25).
    - 2) Ananias and Sapphira’s actions were wrong.....the context shows it and the prohibition of Scripture indicates it as well.
    - 3) And, Ananias and Sapphira knew it was wrong!!

There is also use made of previously **recorded events** as a means of warning people not to be guilty of the same kind of disobedience to God and be lost. The reason why the **recorded event** is wrong is that the action is against the Will of God expressly stated. They therefore are valuable for using to illustrate the dangers of similar actions on the part of people today.

- a) Jude 5-7—Previously **recorded events** in the Old Testament that were bad.
  - 1) Their actions were wrong because they disbelieved (disobeyed God).
  - 2) Their disobedient actions are recorded to serve as warnings even for us today. They are examples of how God punishes such people who are disbelieving and disobedient to Him.
- b) 1 Corinthians 10:1-11—Previously **recorded events** in Old Testament that were bad.
  - 1) The Israelites in the wilderness sinned, disobeyed God by engaging in idolatry and fornication.
  - 2) 23,000 fell in one day under the punishing hand of God!
  - 3) We need to learn from their “bad” example!

**2. Good Examples (recorded actions) that are right to follow.** Again, the context usually shows clearly that the **recorded event or action** is a good one. But that which makes it good is because elsewhere there is a command of God that states that such actions are right.

- a) Matthew 16:13-20—Peter’s confession of Jesus.
  - 1) To confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God is the Will of God. (Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 10:32-33).
  - 2) Jesus even pronounces a blessing upon Peter for making that confession.
- b) John 20:24-28—Thomas’ confession of Jesus.
  - 1) This recorded event is approved by God..... by the very context it is obvious.
  - 2) But again the reason is....that it is the Will of God that men should give recognition to Jesus as Lord and God.

As with bad examples, so with the good, there are previously **recorded events** that are used to encourage us to do what is commanded of God. The reason why the **recorded event** is used is because it illustrates, gives an example, of people doing the Will of God.

- a) Hebrews 11:1-12:2—Great hosts of **recorded actions** that were right.
  - 1) They were right because they believed God, were obedient to God.
  - 2) That is what makes them valuable....they show us what we must do too.
- b) Philippians 3:17—As Paul had lived before them, so should they live.
  - 1) Philippians 4:9 calls attention to the same thought.
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 11:1 emphasizes the same idea....to follow Paul as he followed Christ.
  - 3) But how Paul lived before them was what God had commanded.

## THE VALUE OF “RECORDED ACTIONS”

It should be obvious from the above that **recorded actions** have both a good (positive) and a bad (negative) value. Following are some suggested value that can be easily illustrated in the use of **recorded actions** in addition to what has been suggested above.

- 1. Recorded actions can help to clarify a command.** The second great commandment is to love our neighbor as our self. Jesus was asked to clarify who his neighbor was. Jesus told the story of the “**Good Samaritan**” to make clear who his neighbor was (Luke 10:25-37).
- 2. Recorded actions can help to illustrate the carrying out of a command.** Jesus gave the Great Commission to His apostles (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). The entire book of Acts helps to illustrate the carrying out of the Great Commission.
- 3. Recorded actions can give the “specifics” of how to carry out a “generic” command.** Peter states that elders are not to be “Lords” over God’s people (1 Peter 5:3). A more specific example of what this means is shown in 3 John 9-10 where it records the actions of a man named Diotrephes. We know that there are to be elders in the church because qualifications are given for such before being appointed (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). But we also have a **recorded event** of Paul actually appointing elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Paul would not have done this unless guided by the Holy Spirit to do so. But we depend upon the **recorded action** to let us know the specifics about elders....that is, there is to be a plurality in every church, when men are qualified. The communion of the body and blood of Jesus has been commanded by the Lord (Matthew 26:26-30). Paul rehearses this command in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 and gives additional information to us as to how it is to be observed. Each person is to examine himself before eating, so that he can do it worthily. The Lord’s Supper is to be made distinct from a common meal. It is to be taken together, all at one time, when they assemble. The day that such was to be done is not stated here in so many words, but inferred. They were to partake when they assembled together and their assembly day was evidently the first day of the week, for this is also the time that Paul commanded them to lay by in store (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). But we also have a **recorded event** of a church where Paul visited that met on the first day of the week to “break bread” (Acts 20:7). The action is recorded for a reason. Paul was there and certainly approved of the meeting. In fact, he is probably the one that initiated the time for meeting when he preached there before. It is a record of a group action by the church. It is giving a “specific” to a generic command, what day to meet to observe the Lord’s Supper. Both 1 Corinthians 11 and Acts 20:7 give specifics of what to do and what not to do concerning the Lord’s Supper.
- 4. Recorded actions can in some instances be a pattern for our lives.** Peter said that Jesus left us an example that we might follow him (1 Peter 2:21-23). We not only look at what Jesus taught, but look at His life to see Him living what He preached! The apostle Paul admonished others to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Examples can give us patterns to follow after, when they are themselves patterned after the Will of God!

## **A DISTINCTION TO BE MADE IN “RECORDED ACTIONS”**

- 1. Some recorded actions were personal judgments of an apostle.** Paul chose to support himself at Corinth rather than be supported. It was right to be supported but he chose not to be supported by them. He even received support from elsewhere while there (2 Corinthians 11:7-10). It becomes obvious that preachers can choose to do either one today. Paul also chose not to marry. He made it clear that he was not trying to command anyone not to marry. It was a choice, as he had made (1 Corinthians 7:6-9). Paul’s example can be a good, right, desirable one, but not a binding one!
- 2. Some recorded actions have a lot of “incidentals” that are not important nor binding on mankind today.** Paul preached until midnight at Troas (Acts 20:7). The church at Troas met in an “upper chamber” (Acts 20:8). The Lord’s Supper was taken in an “upper chamber” at “night” (Acts 20:7-8). Common sense has to be used to realize that some of what is mentioned is really “incidental” to the main point of the event. Where one is baptized is an “incidental”, other than the fact that it must be a place where there is sufficient water to immerse a person (Romans 6:4). It is important that “incidentals” are not bound on the church!!
- 3. Some recorded actions may reflect local customs or present technology at that time.** The Great Commission indicates that Christians are to see that the message of Christ is taken into all the world (Mark 16:15). The means that they had of getting that message to all creation were “incidentals.” Such should not be bound on us today. On Paul’s third missionary journey he was collecting money from among the Gentile churches (primarily) to send back to help relieve the poor saints in Jerusalem. It was not an emergency because it took several years for this to be accomplished. It was a means of trying to cement the two together as one in Christ by showing a mutual concern for one another. Paul did not feel it best that he carry all that money by himself, so the churches that helped sent messengers with Paul to carry the money firsthand to Jerusalem. Since they had no reliable system of getting the money to Jerusalem otherwise and had no bank drafts to send it, nor Western Unions, the judgment that Paul made was a wise one (2 Corinthians 8:16-24; 9:12-13). Such actions are not binding, but it is obvious that the principles that were involved in these actions are important and to be emulated.

## **CONCLUSION**

Some feel that because of so much variations or distinctions that need to be made about **recorded actions** (examples) that we should not teach that any of them are binding upon us today. However, others point out that most **recorded actions** that we are concerned with are merely illustrating how a command is carried out, and that it is not the “example” that is binding on us, but the command behind it. The two actually support each other!

A lot of division has been caused among the people of God over this question of **recorded actions** being binding. Most of the problem has been caused by not taking an overview of the whole subject before drawing conclusions. If such were done, and thought through,

conditions could be a lot better among us. By all means, arbitrary approaches to **recorded actions** as binding must be stopped! To pick and choose as one so desires is not honest, nor good Bible study and understanding.

An example might be worthwhile to illustrate how people often do not think through their subject well enough.

1. We have a command to Worship God, and in an assembled group (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:24-25).
2. But we have an example of the early church meeting **DAILY** IN THE Temple for worship to God (Acts 2:46-47).
3. Is this example binding on us?
4. Would it be wrong for us to meet together and worship God daily?
5. Has God commanded this to be done?

## Questions for Discussion

1. How would you distinguish between an “approved example” and one that is not?
2. In what two ways are “bad examples” used in the Bible?
  - a) Matthew 26:69-74---
  - b) Jude 5-7---
3. In what two ways are “good examples” used in the Bible?
  - a) Matthew 16:13-20---
  - b) Hebrews 11:1-12:2---
4. What are some values of recorded actions (examples) in the Bible?
  - a) Luke 10:25-27---
  - b) Matthew 28:18-20; Book of Acts---
  - c) Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 20:7---
  - d) 1 Peter 2:21-23---
5. What are some distinctions that need to be made about recorded actions?
  - a) 2 Corinthians 11:7-10---
  - b) Acts 20:8---
  - c) 2 Corinthians 8:16-24; 9:12-13---
6. Are all “approved examples” binding on us today?
  - a) Acts 2:46-47---
  - b) Acts 13:2-3---
  - c) 2 Corinthians 8:1-8---
  - d) Acts 16:3---
  - e) Acts 20:7---
7. In what sense are “approved examples” binding on us today?

## Lesson Eleven

## **“EXPEDIENTS, AIDS, OPTIONALS IN COMMANDS”**

The following motto came out of the Restoration Movement that is trying to express the concept that involves our study in this lesson: **“In matters of Faith, Unity; In matters of Opinion, Liberty; In all Things, Love.”** We have already discussed briefly the question of Opinion with stress on its proper place in our obedience to God. Opinion must not take the place of the commands of God, but opinions **MUST** be used in carrying out the commands of God! In God’s wisdom, a large area has been left to human judgment in serving God. No detail laws, rules and regulations have been given for much of our activity in serving God. For instance:

1. No instructions about elders’ meeting, or even if they should have any;
2. No exact order of worship, number of songs or prayers, length of sermon, etc.;
3. No blueprint for building a meeting house, much less having a meeting house.

These, and hundreds of other things, all fall into the realm of what is often referred to as **Expedients, Aids, Judgments, or Opinions**. It might be well to look at three terms that will help to clarify our study: **Expedients, Aids, and Optionals**.

### **WHAT ARE EXPEDIENTS?**

Simply stated, an **Expedient** is that which expedites the carrying out of a command without changing the command! It is the use of common sense (wisdom) in carrying out what God has commanded. An example:

1. God commands us to “Go” and preach the gospel.
2. A person may want to walk to go preach the gospel.
3. But it might be wiser to drive a car to get there.
4. But either one is carrying out the command.

**Expedients** grow out of a command. Where a command is **Generic** in nature, all aids, means, methods, modes, and manners that are helpful are things that we have authority to use in obeying God. A **Generic** command allows or permits all **Expedients** that may be used in attempting to carry out the command, except where such would be in violation on one or more commands elsewhere. Even a **specific** command allows for some judgment or **Expedients**. Both are illustrated below:

1. Generic command—“Go” preach the gospel.
  - a) Since no means or methods are proscribed in “how” we go, we may go by any means available to us.
  - b) But, in using whatever **Expedient**, we must “Go.”
2. Specific command—“Sing”
  - a) The kind of music is specified....so we must sing.
  - b) But there are **Expedients** to be used in carrying out the command:
    - 1) All sing soprano, or 4-part harmony?
    - 2) Song leader?
    - 3) Song Books, etc.?

An **Expedient** must be that which is helpful, profitable, beneficial, advantageous, or good in the carrying out of a command! An **Expedient** is a means to an end. When God commands, we must do! But He has given us permission, authority, or choice of judgment in carrying out of those commands. Where a command is given with no specifications as to how it is to be done, it necessarily follows that we are to use our best judgment in carrying it out. The command cannot be changed, added to, or taken away from (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). But the means or methods used in carrying out the command may vary or change with varying circumstances.

## WHAT ARE AIDS?

An **Aid** is simply a means of carrying out a command of God. It is the same as an **Expedient**. . . .that which expedites a command. The following are illustrations of **Aids**:

1. A song book **Aids** the worshipper to sing by guiding his mind in the words to be sung.
2. A song leader **Aids** the worshippers in staying together with the right pitch and tune.
3. Placing numbers on a board in view for all to see is an **Aid** to the worshipper to sing by helping him to see, as well as to hear, the next number to be sung.

An **Aid** does not change the act of singing, but merely **Aids** or expedites the command. Neither do **Aids** add to the command. There is a difference between an **Aid** and an **Addition**. The following will illustrate the difference:

1. Noah was told to build an Ark of Gopher Wood.
  - a) If he used hammers, saws, nails, etc., to build it, he still obeyed what God said, to build an Ark of Gopher Wood.
  - b) But if Noah had added another kind of wood, he would have disobeyed God's command.
2. Christians are commanded to sing.
  - a) If we use Hymn books, song leaders, pitch pipes to carry out the command, these things are merely **Aids**.
  - b) An Instrumental accompaniment is advocated as an **Aid** to singing also.
  - c) It may be, but it is also an **Addition**, for it introduces another kind of music that God did not authorize.
  - d) We are commanded to sing. . . .not sing and play!

**Aids** do not change or add to God's command. Additions do!! Additions are sinful!!

## WHAT ARE OPTIONALS?

All **Optionals** may not be **Expedient**, but all **Expedients** are **Optional**. **Expedients** are not to be bound as Law! They are not Law, not God's Law at least. Men may choose to make them Law and bring the displeasure of God (Matthew 15:1-9). The fact that something is **Optional** shows that it is not binding as Law. The two illustrations below will help to show this:

1. Two families compose the church in a city.
  - a) They need a place to meet to worship.
  - b) What are their **Options**?

- 1) They can meet in their own homes;
  - 2) They can rent a public place;
  - 3) They can buy a place;
  - 4) They can build a place.
  - c) God leaves such decisions of judgment up to us.
  - d) What would be the wisest choice? Those two families have to work that out.
2. Bible Classes for all ages.
- a) God wants His Word taught to all.
  - b) What are some **Options**?
    - 1) Invite people into my home.
    - 2) Rent a public building and invite people to come.
    - 3) Build a church building and have Bible Classes for all ages.
  - c) Bible classes are just one of the many **Options** that could be chosen.
  - d) Since they are all **Options**, we have a choice.
  - e) No one can force us to have or not to have Bible classes.

## **DETAILS OF COMMANDS ARE LEFT TO HUMAN JUDGMENT**

The following is just a short list of the many things that are in the realm of human judgment in carrying out commands of God:

1. Time to assemble on the Lord's Day for worship.
2. Length of worship or sermon.
3. Size of local congregation.
4. How many churches to be in a city.
5. How many times to meet on the Lord's Day or during the week.
- 6) How to dress when we come to worship, other than it is to be done in modesty, decorum, fitting.
- 7) How many elders or deacons in a congregation, other than there must be a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1).
- 8) How long elders and deacons are to serve.
- 9) Whether we will rent, borrow, or buy a place for worship assembly.
- 10) How the building is to be furnished.
- 11) etc.

Even God's simple, specific command to immerse people in water has things left to human judgment:

- 1) Whether the person is buried frontwards or backwards.
- 2) Whether to baptize in running water or still water.
- 3) Whether the administrator has to have certain qualifications to baptize.
- 4) What kind of clothes the person should wear being baptized.
- 5) etc.

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF EXPEDIENTS

The following illustrations may be helpful in further understanding of the role played by **Expedients** in carrying out of God's commands:

1. **The command to worship infers a place to meet for worship together.** To rent a building, buy a building, or to build a building is an option in order to carry out the command. Chairs, lights, heating, air-conditioning, water fountain, restrooms, carpets, padded pews, are all **Aids, Expedients** involved in carrying out the command. But none of these things can be bound as Law, for none are a necessity to worship together. The assembly can take place in an open field, without lights, heat or air-conditioning or chairs, etc., but it would be hard to do on a regular basis!!! Common sense is used in making such decisions.
2. **The command to baptize infers a place to baptize people.** A baptistry is an **Option**, but not a necessity. Because we could go and find a stream and baptize people there. But common sense is used in making such decisions.
3. **The command to evangelize allows for an invitation song.** An invitation song is an **Optional** matter, because it is merely an **Aid to Expedite** the command to evangelize people. To bind it as Law is sinful.
4. **We are commanded to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions.** But no specifics are given as to how all of this is to be done. There are several **Optional** ways to accomplish such. Judgment is called for to be exercised, as long as what is done is not contrary to a command of God. To bind an **Optional** way as Law is sinful.

## DANGERS TO BE AVOIDED

It is vital that we recognize what things are in the realm of judgment. The unity and peace of a congregation greatly depends upon such. Men have not only made laws in the realm of judgment, but have also changed matters of faith as well. Both of these grave dangers must be avoided. A loving Christian will guard against such. It should be obvious that in the real of judgment there will be diverse opinions. To expect everyone's judgment to agree with mine is the height of arrogance. But to try to impose my judgment as Law upon others is trying to usurp the place of God Himself.

Suppose that one or more men decided that to have a midnight service would be very helpful to the congregation on a given occasion each year. It is brought up, discussed, and decided upon as a good thing to be done. So far, so good! But suppose that this special midnight service became a test of fellowship in determining one's faithfulness to Christ. Further error is fostered when a person must commit himself to such a service before he can become a Christian. Christians need to work together in matters of judgment, but there is a big difference between making an appeal to cooperate in some good work or activity than in preaching our judgment as disobedience to God! Such must be avoided by all means!!

But it is also just as wrong and divisive to object to a method as being unscriptural when no method has been given by God. Such may be objected to on the grounds that it may not be the

best or wisest method to use, but still recognize that such is one's judgment. We must not try to impose our will upon our fellow-Christians by subtle and deceptive means!!

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. **When God commands us what He wants, does man have an option to do what God commands or what he wants to do? (Mark 7:8)**
2. **When God gives a command, does He leave room for human judgment in the execution of the command? (Illustrate with Mark 16:15)**
3. **What is an Expedient?**
4. **What is an Aid?**
5. **What is meant by the term, Optional?**
6. **Illustrate the difference between "Matters of Faith" (Obligation) and "Matters of Expediency" (Optional).**
7. **Can a matter of expediency become sin? (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23)**
8. **Illustrate the difference between an Aid and an Addition to God's commands.**
9. **What is meant by the term, Optional, in the realm of human judgment?**
10. **What are some dangers to be avoid in this area?**

**MATTERS OF FAITH**  
(Commanded & Obligatory)

1. Commanded to “Go.” (Mk. 16:15)
2. Commanded to “Teach.” (Matt. 28:18-20)
3. Commanded to “Preach.” (Mk. 16:15)
4. Commanded to “Baptize.” (Matt. 28:19)
5. Commanded to assemble to worship. (Heb. 10:25; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 11:17-18)
6. Commanded to “Pray.” (1 Thess. 5:17)
7. Commanded to “Sing.” (Eph. 5:19)
8. Commanded to “Give.” (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
9. Commanded to partake of “Lord’s Supper.” (1 Cor. 11:27)
10. Commanded to care for orphans. (Jas. 1:27)

**NO CHOICE!**

**Must not LOOSE what God has BOUND!**

**MATTERS OF JUDGMENT**  
(Expedient & Optional)

1. We may walk, ride, fly, sail, etc.
2. Use blackboard, films, projectors, classes, songs, puzzles, discussion format, written tests, pictures.
3. Use Radio, TV, Press, Pulpit, Bible Readings, Parables, Illustrations, Amplifier, Records, Tapes, etc.
4. Use a lake, stream, ocean, bathtub, or baptistry.
5. Rent or own meeting place; times of assemblies, how many times.
6. Kneeling pads on pews, someone to lead prayer, pray in song, various body positions in prayer.
7. Song book, song leader, tuning fork, shape notes or round notes, four-part harmony, singing schools.
8. Use plate, basket, or lay it on table. Use purpose system, envelopes, checks, or money.
9. Table or Tables, one or many cups, one piece of bread or one hundred pieces.
10. Give money, provide a home, adopt, foster-care, etc.

**MANY CHOICES!**

**Must not BIND what God has LOOSED!**

## Lesson Twelve

**“OVERVIEW, REVIEW, AND AN EXHORTATION”**

*“So Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren.’”* (Genesis 13:8)

When controversy arose between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot, Abraham was quick to point out a very crucial fact that helps to settle a lot of disputes---“*We be brethren.*” If only we could remember this fact, it might help us to work out any differences we have among ourselves as children of God. The purpose of this series of studies is to offer help for brethren to work out their differences sensibly and logically and come to a united understanding of God’s Will. It is sincerely hoped that they have been of value to this end!

It is an obvious fact that the church can neither be glorious nor a powerful influence in a community unless it is united. To be united, individuals in it must be willing to “lose themselves,” forsake selfishness and fleshly pride in favor of a great love and humility toward the Lord and one another. Unity of brotherly relationships is far more important than our own individual and personal glory and power. Disunity is unusually caused by our unwillingness to forsake our individual selves in favor of the group. Abraham was willing to suffer personal loss in order to keep unity.

**BASIC CAUSES OF DISUNITY**

Unity among God’s people is stressed over and over in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12:25; Ephesians 4:2-3; John 17, etc.). We must not forget that God “hates” those who cause discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:19).

- 1. One of the primary causes of disunity is carnality** (1 Corinthians 3:3). Carnality is where one is dominated by fleshly outlooks rather than spiritual outlooks.
- 2. Another cause of disunity is pride** (1 John 2:16). Pride is the cultivating of one’s ego to an abnormal degree and it is rooted in a lust for glory and power. It is the opposite of a willingness to lose one’s self for Christ’s sake or others’ sake.
- 3. A third factor in promoting disunity is ignorance** (1 Timothy 1:5-7). Such do not know the proper way of handling the Word of God, but try to push their ignorance to the point of dividing God’s people.
- 4. A fourth factor is gossip** (1 Timothy 5:13). Repeating things about people that are intended to undermine or undercut their influence without knowing the facts.

Division is not only condemned as a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), but it greatly hinders the progress of the spread of the gospel of Christ. But it also hinders the proper maturing of God’s people. To make Jesus’ disciples “two-fold more a child of hell” than ourselves is not what Jesus had in mind (Matthew 23:15). He wants disciples who are matured in Him, in His

Will (teachings), but also in His spirit (love, mercy, patience, longsuffering, kindness, etc., Ephesians 4:31-32). Unity is not only commanded, desired, but is possible even while we are learning, growing, and dealing with problems in our midst!!

The following brief article expressed so well the kind of spirit that should characterize the child of God. The author is unknown.

Can all people understand the Bible alike? A better question is this; "Can anyone perfectly understand the Bible?" The answer to that question is "NO." And this renders superfluous the original question. Jesus said that the people who think they see (spiritually) are blind (John 9:39-41). There is no blindness quite so dark as that of the person who thinks he understands everything and that everything he thinks is true. We see through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12). The most perceptive among us are quite ignorant. The world is not divided between those who have the truth and those who don't; it is divided between those who are looking for the truth and those who are not.

"Does this mean then, when religious beliefs differ, that one man's view is as good as another's, that there is no distinction to be made?" Not at all. What it does mean is that the case should not be pre-judged in my favor. It is simply to recognize what should be self-evident, that no person is infallible. It is to recognize that truth suffers when men think they have it cornered and begin to sit on it. It is to recognize that it is not only possible but desirable to have confidence in what you believe, to try to convert the sinner from the errors of his way, and yet to realize at the same time we have much to learn ourselves (Galatians 6:1).

## OVERVIEW

It should be obvious that we are governed by **commands** of God that are **generic** and **specific** in nature. It should also be obvious that commands are expressed **explicitly** (words, facts) and **implicitly** (implied facts). We tried to show that commands have an **exclusive** nature about them that must be recognized. It was also shown that God not only gives commands, but He records **actions** of men and women in His Word to help to illustrate what He has commanded of us. It should be obvious that some of these **recorded actions** have been placed in God's Word to help us to see the various ways that commands can be carried out, while some of the **recorded actions** take on a sense of obligation.... "*to do thou likewise.*" This distinction is an obvious one in most instances and is very important for us to recognize. The greatest possible problems that we have is to recognize that hundreds of things can be involved in the area of **expedients** or **aids**

in the carrying out of the commands of God. Human judgment is called for----and it is here that human pride, jealousy, carnality can have its "field-day" if we are not on our guard.

## FINAL NOTE

Infallibility is not claimed for this series of lessons. But it is an attempt to help challenge a closer study and understanding of the subject on “**How to Establish Biblical Authority.**” We trust that it has been that help. Please fill out the REVIEW QUESTIONS to test your retention and understanding of the material, and let this be used to help one another to a better understanding of our obligations to God and to one another.

## REVIEW TEST

Test your retention and understanding of these lessons by indicating in the blank which category the following things fall into. Five examples will be given to help illustrate.

## CATEGORIES

- 1 - Command**
- 2 - Implied Command**
- 3 - Special Approved Example**
- 4 - Expedient (Aid)**
- 5 - Addition (error)**

## ILLUSTRATIONS:

- 2   1. The Christian is to go and preach the gospel into all the world.
- 1   2. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.
- 4   3. The Christian may walk, ride, fly or sail to carry the gospel.
- 3   4. The Lord’s Supper is to be taken on the first day of the week.
- 5   5. Musical Instruments may be used to aid the worship.
  
- 6. Making attendance at Wednesday Evening service a Law to be obeyed.
- 7. My name does not appear in the New Testament; therefore, I have no obligation to keep any commands.
- 8. The Jailer had to repent to be saved.
- 9. Jesus was crucified on Friday.
- 10. The Jailer’s household did not include infants.
- 11. A woman cannot be an elder.
- 12. Jesus went down into the water to be baptized.
- 13. I must repent to be saved.
- 14. Humming or whistling in worship.
  
- 15. Elders are also heads of the church.
- 16. We are to care for the poor, needy, widows, orphans.
- 17. The church can worship in someone’s house.
- 18. The fruit of the vine can be served in only one container.
- 19. Money can be given by placing it on the table up front or in a box in the back.
- 20. Money taken out of the church treasury to build a building to meet in.

- \_\_\_ 21. Praying through Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- \_\_\_ 22. All “recorded actions” (examples) are binding on us today.
- \_\_\_ 23. The life of Jesus is important to us.
- \_\_\_ 24. Paul’s celibate life is a must for men today.
- \_\_\_ 25. The Lord’s Supper must be taken in an “upper chamber.”
- \_\_\_ 26. Sending money to a church or a preacher by bank draft.
- \_\_\_ 27. Having padded pews in the meeting house.
- \_\_\_ 28. Have a place to eat together in the meeting house.
- \_\_\_ 29. Singing in 40-part harmony.
- \_\_\_ 30. Invitation song.
- \_\_\_ 31. Use of a baptistry.
- \_\_\_ 32. To appoint an elder at age 45.
- \_\_\_ 33. Kneeling pads on pews.
- \_\_\_ 34. Elders have to be 55 years old before being appointed.
- \_\_\_ 35. Elders appointed who have lost their first wife and married again.
- \_\_\_ 36. Show a religious film on Wednesday night.
- \_\_\_ 37. Nursery in a meeting house.
- \_\_\_ 38. Restrooms in a meeting house.
- \_\_\_ 39. Water fountain in a meeting house.
- \_\_\_ 40. P. A. System in a meeting house.
- \_\_\_ 41. Decisions made in a business meeting.
- \_\_\_ 42. Who can be used in the worship assembly.
- \_\_\_ 43. How long the sermon should be.
- \_\_\_ 44. Using visual aids in teaching and preaching.
- \_\_\_ 45. How many songs and prayers to have in the worship assembly.
- \_\_\_ 46. Making announcements in the worship assembly.
- \_\_\_ 47. Having an invitation song at the end of the sermon.
- \_\_\_ 48. Taking interest on the money contributed to the Lord’s work.
- \_\_\_ 49. Paying interest on borrowed money buy and build a meeting place.
- \_\_\_ 50. Selling and making money on a house owned by the church.



