

ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY—PART 1

As we read and study the Bible, we need to know how to establish the authority for the things that we practice. This is not to say that we try to establish authority for what we WANT to practice, but that we make sure to HAVE authority for what we DO practice. This is a major distinction which separates the true Christians from the pretenders. We want to “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ep 5:17) rather than make our traditions more important than God’s word (Mt 15:9).

There are three ways which we can establish authority: command, example, and necessary inference. All of these concepts are put to use in everyday life. Try to find another way to communicate your own desires...you just can’t do it. A command is just that; a direct statement telling us to do or not to do something. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. We will discuss the nature of generic and specific commands later. An example is where we look for things that were done with the approval of the Apostles and prophets. Some examples are binding, some are not. One example is that found in Acts 20:7 regarding the frequency of the Lord’s Supper. Again, we will explore this in further detail in another article. The third area is necessary inference. This is the idea that some things are not expressly commanded, but can be inferred in order to accomplish the command. For example, we are commanded to assemble, but no specific command or examples are given as to where. The necessary inference is that we need a place to assemble; therefore we can use a home or school. We can rent or purchase a building. None of these violate any other commands or examples.

The whole point is, we want to be sure that we are not going outside of the boundaries that God has given us. To put it another way, we want to make sure that we do not disqualify ourselves from the race by running outside of the track! As long as we follow a known path (that shown by Jesus and the Apostles) then we do not have to worry about straying. As soon as we begin adding things (or subtracting) then we put ourselves in real danger. We will deal with these subjects in more detail in further articles.

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