

ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY—PART 2

As previously discussed, there are three ways to determine authority: Direct command, binding example, and necessary inference. This article will deal with the first, direct command. This is the simplest to describe and understand.

A direct command is a statement that either requires something or denies something. Sometimes these commands are very specific, sometimes they are more general. For example, Jesus commands us in Mark 16:15 to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” This command contains both specific and generic elements.

Specifically, Jesus commanded us to preach “the gospel”. We cannot deviate from that course. We cannot preach anything else, be it philosophy, psychology, or politics. Therefore when you hear a sermon or lesson (or teach one), it should contain only the gospel. Generically, Jesus commanded us to “preach”. There are many ways in which we might preach. We might use a pulpit. We might do it over the radio or television. We might preach for an hour, or have an all day event. We might preach in a suit and tie, or in jeans and a tee-shirt. We might preach at home, at school, at work, or anywhere else. Do you see the difference? We are also commanded to “go”. How will we go? By plane, by train or by automobile, it matters not. By foot, bike, or roller-skates would also be acceptable.

Another example is God’s command to Noah in Genesis 6:14 to “Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.” Apply the same principal as above. God specifically commanded gopherwood. All other varieties of wood are then excluded. Had he decided to use cedar instead, because it was a much more fragrant wood, and looked nicer, would he have followed God’s command? Of course not. Later God also specified dimensions and a few other things. Generically, God told him to “make”. Other than the materials and the dimensions, Noah had the authority to decide how to accomplish it. Noah’s use of cedar would alter the command, but his use of a chainsaw versus a hand saw would not.

Understand that commands are very often modified by examples and inferences as well. We will discuss those in future articles. When you are fulfilling a command, are you doing what is needed to fulfill it, or are you adding something more?

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