

The eldership here in Lindale has requested more studies related to Bible Authority. Lord willing, in the 4th quarters, we will have a full (Sun/Wed) quarter of study on that topic, with booklets and such.

In the mean time, I would like to bring back some basic principles of God's Authority. There are a few simple things that everyone must accept before progress can be made in this field of study.

Firstly, let's be clear on what we mean. Bible Authority – God's word, the New Covenant in particular, has the right and power to tell what we can and cannot do. It has the power to tell me yes or no in my personal life and choices. It has the right to tell us yes or no as we operate as a local church in Christ.

Secondly, God has clearly established this.

- **Matthew 28:18-20** – Risen and about to Rule – He claims His right to direct our lives!
- **Colossians 2:8-12** – Jesus is Deity. He makes us, remakes us, and His doctrine drives us.
- **II John 9** – This is primarily about His identity, but encompasses His message as well.

So, we go to the New Testament, to the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles, pull it all together and do what the Bible says: individually and/or collectively, because He is God. Sounds good, right?

Well, there has certainly been lots of preaching on this. There are a fairly short list of topics that we repeatedly, year after year, go to and say: "Look, we have to study Bible Authority on this." I made a list of the top 9, broken easily into three categories:

Among the Religious Majority:

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| 1) Baptism as Essential | 2) Musical Worship | 3) Lord Supper Observance |
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Among our Own Brethren:

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| 4) General Benevolence | 5) Sponsoring Church | 6) Women Leadership |
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In the Individual's Life:

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| 7) Divorce and Remarriage | 8) Morality Choices | 9) Assembly Importance |
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If Bible authority is so straightforward, why is everybody always disagreeing about this, and why hasn't sermons or sincere conversation made much of a difference in the overall picture?

I mean, have you talked to someone about why we sing and do not include instruments? You can read all the authority passages, then accumulate all the N.T. passages on the topic:

Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15; I Cor. 14:26. And what will you hear:

"Yeah, we do that at our church, but we also..."

"Hey, there is no command saying you can't..."

"It is important that the Bible and culture work together"

I could run you through the same comments and reasoning with all 9 of these and many more! Some get tired of the arguing so they say nothing. Some get weak on their stance and give in. What about you? How will you stand for Bible Authority and be consistent on these issues?

Let's talk about One Idea with the power to help us all: **PATTERNS SET LIMITS.**

It is an acknowledgement of this one, basic sense, idea that must be in place to find Truth.

Patterns: The entire collection of information related to a particular issue or question.

Set Limits: This information puts in place borders in which our decision and answers must lie.

I was going to give you some common sense illustrations, like kids asking for a piece of candy in the pantry, or bicycle instructions on birthdays, but you don't need that. It is actually obvious.

When authority lays out the information, honoring authority honors the limits of the information.

Instead, I just want to briefly show you that it has ALWAYS been this way with God.

Adam: God made rules for Adam to follow. When he went beyond them, Eden was lost.
(Some will say: "Yeah but that was a commanded restriction." Same with women leaders in churches!)

Noah: God was specific with the pattern for what He wanted. "Thus Noah did, according to all that God had commanded him, so he did" **Genesis 6:22**. The specifics of God limited Noah's activities.

Moses: **Exodus 25:9** – "According to all I'm going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it." **Exodus 40: 16** – "Thus Moses did..."

David: Remember the moving of the ark of the covenant? God said Kohathites shall carry the ark (**Num. 4:15**). They did so for 500 years. But David found a new way and the cart tipped and Uzzah touched it and died. Later, after mourning the death, David came back and said, "Not one is to carry the ark of God but Levites! (**I Chr. 15:2**)!"

In each of these cases, and in their whole lives with God, things were simple. God gave them information to show them what He wanted. Sometimes there were commands, sometimes restrictions, sometimes examples, sometimes statements. When they honored it, He blessed them. When they didn't, He didn't.

Well, someone will say: "That was Old Testament times. In Jesus things are different." Are they? Did you read with me the opening passages about the Authority of Jesus and Honoring His Teachings? Here are a few more New Testament passages that infuse the text with "pattern" language and implications:

II Timothy 1:13-14 – "Retain the standard (pattern) of sound words which you heard from me"

I Corinthians 4:4-6 – Yes God examines me. But also "you may learn not to exceed what is written."

I Corinthians 14:34-37 – "the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment"

Revelation 22:18-19 – "If anyone adds to them... if anyone takes away from the words of this book..."

This idea that God used to work with patterns, limiting behavior, and expecting obedience, but NOT, in Christ, we have liberty to go beyond what is written... is FALSE. Jesus was with God in the beginning, when God expected Adam to do as God said. And Jesus is here now, looking for those who honor His will.

Patterns Set Limits – We must accumulate all we can gather on a topic, so that we can be very clear what is directed and approved by God. We will have liberty within those limits (more on that in future lessons) but our own emotions or reasoning does not warrant changes to the pattern of obedience to God.

Example: **General Benevolence**. Sadly, God's people have been dividing over this issue for many years. The question is simple: "For whom can the church treasury be used?"

Some say: Only for needy saints and to support Gospel Preachers.

Some say: Yes to those two but also we can use the funds to help people in the community.

It is worth some weight that there are 10 passages in the New Testament where we have command or example or statements directly pertaining to the usage of the church treasury, with regard to people.

NOTE: this is not to say the Bible doesn't discuss individual benevolence and kindness to all, nor to say that these verses restrict Christians from helping all men. The Bible speaks to that (James 1:27; Galatians 6:10). But the question is about the work of the church in the use of the treasury, and a Pattern is seen in Scripture.

Acts 2:43-47 – Funds shared by believers for believers in need. (Note 3:6 – no funds for general sharing)

Acts 4:32-35 – Money contributed and collected by the church to help saints in need.

Acts 6:1-2 – The church provided for widows among their Christian number.

Acts 11:27-30 – "relief of the brethren living in Judea."

I Corinthians 9:11-14 – Ministers being financially supported by churches.

I Corinthians 16:1-2 – A contribution taken up called "the collection for the saints."

II Corinthians 8:1-5 – "support of the saints."

II Corinthians 9:1,12-13 – "ministry for the saints" "the need of the saints"

Philippians 4:15-16 – Churches financially supported Paul in his preaching journeys.

I Timothy 5:16 – Widows among saints who had no support were taken care of by the church.

I Timothy 5:17-18 – Elders authorized to be supported in their shepherding work.

Brethren, like all men, will argue and reason about these things until the end. But can we be a people of unity? Maybe putting aside our own ideas and emotions, just following what we can read, and standing together on His Word?