

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby we
may edify
one another.



John 8:32
And
ye shall
know the
truth and
the truth
shall make
you free.

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2
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HOW DO I INTERPRET SCRIPTURE?

Jim Stauffer

For one to be guided accurately and consistently, there must be something upon which he relies as his authority of what is right and wrong. As a child growing up I soon learned to not only obey my father but to respect his knowledge and experience in matters. This led to a reliance upon his wisdom versus that of others, whether it be peers or even other authority figures in my life. I believed he spoke the truth and if there was a disagreement between his word and that of others I would always chose his.

The same must be true when we choose our path spiritually/religiously. There has to be one authority upon which we can rely. Obviously since we are seeking to obey the God of heaven and He has revealed His Will for us in the New Testament, He is the one authority for us to follow.

There is a very simple example of acting in concert with authority found in the Old Testament. Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God. Cain's sacrifice was not pleasing to God and Abel's was. What was the difference? We are told in **Heb. 11:4**, *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh.* Be sure to notice the statement, *By faith*. This means Abel was acting in concert with some instruction or guidelines from God. Cain did not. We can only please God by consulting His word and trusting in it.

The question then is how do we understand what God has spoken in His word to man, the Bible. There are at least three very commonly accepted ways in which authorization of action is communicated. By a direct statement, by an approved example, or further by a statement that forces an obvious or necessary inference.

Direct Statement - We generally refer to direct statements in Scripture as commands. Jesus reprimanded the Pharisees in **Mat. 15:9** by saying, *but in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the*

precepts of men. They were following direct statements, approved examples and necessary inferences but they received them from men and not from God. There was nothing wrong with the process. Their failure was in the source. We, therefore, must be certain the direct statements we follow are from the Lord. An example of a direct statement is what we call the Great Commission the Lord delivered to His apostles. **Mark 16:15** *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.* There is little difficulty in understanding this direct statement. It is from God and any direct or indirect statements that differ from it are from a less authoritative source and should be rejected. When our fathers gave us such a direct statement in our youth and our friends persuaded us to change it or disregard it, what was the result. An angry father who delivered appropriate punishment. The same will be the case with our heavenly father if we disregard or alter His direct statements.

Approved Example - What is considered to be an approved example in Scripture? Many use the term approved apostolic example to emphasize the need for inspired men to have given their approval. Any example the Scripture recommends to us as pleasing in the eyes of God is an approved example. We use in our daily lives the expression, "chip off the old block". That tells us a young person is walking in the footsteps of their parents, whether it be father or mother, son or daughter. Peter tells us we are called to be a "chip off the old block" in reference to walking in the footsteps of Jesus (**1 Pet. 2:21**). We learn how the church is to use its treasury by such an example. In **Acts 11:28-30**, we learn of a famine that brought poverty and distress to the brethren in Judea. The church at Antioch decided to send relief to them and did so by way of Paul and Barnabas to the hands of the elders of the church in Jerusalem. We learn from this example it is appropriate spending of the funds of the church to send relief to

needy saints. So, we learn who to help and how to do it. The local church sends its money or goods to the elders of the church in need to be distributed as the individual saints have need. We are following in the footsteps of the apostles as they follow Christ. An approved apostolic example.

Necessary Inference - A perfect illustration of this type of communication is when the apostle Paul met with the brethren at Troas on his way back to Jerusalem. The scripture tells us, *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. (Acts 20:7).* How do we know how often and when to keep the feast Jesus instituted in **Mat. 26:26-29**? This passage teaches us by way of example. They did so on the first day of the week. If that is the case, and it is, which first day of the week should we choose? It would be arbitrary to assume any particular first day of the week. It is obviously the first day of every week. Which week does not have a first day? That is how we learn what is being taught.

The problem with this teaching is the same as it was in Jesus' day and will always be. Men have often already decided from information presented from other men what and when they will do certain things. And when they learn what the Bible actually says, they do not have the will to break their traditions and follow Scripture. It is as Jesus said in that case, *vain worship, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.*

The sad thing about mankind is he uses all three of these methods of communication both in giving and receiving instruction in his daily activities. He has a source of authority and follows it when it gives him direct orders, when it provides him with an example or when it teaches him by forcing him to draw a necessary inference from its wording.

Why can we not see that the Bible communicates in ways we can and do understand daily? And the Bible is communicating a much more important message than our daily temporal instructions. Shall we listen before it is eternally too late?

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The matter of authority is basic, not only to religion, but to everyday concerns of life. For example, when you go to the grocery store and ask for one pound of hamburger meat, you have faith that the scales used by the grocer to weigh the meat are correct. You recognize that the State of Texas has an Office of Weights and Measurements, and this office has the task of ensuring that the scales used to weigh meat are accurate. The scales may need to be checked and calibrated from

time to time, but you believe you are getting what you paid for. Now a question for you: Why do people see the need for correct scales, that is, scales that conform to a standard of authority; but these same folks will say that when it comes to the matter of serving the Lord, it really doesn't matter what one believes, or that you even need to try to go by the Bible? Why is that? When we speak of the church of Christ, we speak of people who are in a covenant relationship with Christ, their spiritual head. Men and women are drawn to the Lord through His word. In turn, these same people are brought together as one, based upon the commonality of the gospel. Yet, to think that you can be of Christ and His spiritual family presupposed the need for a standard of authority. In this case, it is the authority of Christ that matters most of all. Jesus claimed to have all authority; and as our head, His authority is expressed in what He says we are and in how He wants us to respond to Him in our work and worship together (**Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 1:20-23**).

Some of the leading religious people of Jesus' day questioned Him once about His teaching and activities. Specifically, they asked Him about the baptism of John – was it authorized by heaven or by men-**(Matt. 21:25)**? In spite of their bad attitudes for asking, that is not a bad question. It is basic and fundamental because it focuses our attention on the all important questions of authority. If something is of God, then it must be accepted without question. If it is not of God, then it must be rejected, whether we like it or not.

Jesus Christ is our source of authority. His will for His people in these last days is expressed through the New Testament (**Heb.1:1-3; John 12:48; 2 John 9**). The source of authority is not the Old Testament. While all of God's word is important, the Old Testament does not constitute the basis of authority for New Testament Christianity. Some are confused about this, as evidenced by appeals to Old Testament scriptures in order to justify such practices as Sabbath day keeping, burning incense in worship, and instrumental music in worship. The Old Law was a good law in that it did what God wanted it to do, namely, it brought men to the Christ (**Gal. 3:23-25**). Jesus did not destroy the Law. He fulfilled it and then nailed it to His cross (**Matt. 5:17, Col 2:14**).

To make proper use of God's word we must begin with the understanding that all authority belongs to Deity and to Deity alone. With this foundation we are then ready to proceed in our efforts to understand and implement God's word in our lives each day. Only then are we truly the church that belongs to Christ. *"Let God be found true, but every man a liar..." (Rom. 3:4).*

Randy Harshbarger

Do You Understand? Can You Explain?

Do you understand quantum physics? Do you even know what it is? (Most of us do not.) Now, imagine that you have the task of explaining it to someone else. Impossible! How can you hope to explain what you do not understand yourself?

We hope this illustrates a point we want to make about the Bible. The majority of people in the world mistakenly view the Bible as a confusing and difficult book. Sadly, too many Christians are unable to help resolve this problem because they simply cannot explain what they have never understood themselves. They don't know God's truth well enough to be able to explain it to others.

The Bible can be understood (**Ephesians 3:2-5**). In fact, we are commanded to understand it (**Ephesians 5:17**). If we imagine that the Bible is too hard to understand, we are actually casting a charge against God. We are maintaining that He was unable to produce a revelation that the average man or woman can grasp. Not true!

The real problem here is a lack of dedication and a failure to work diligently. Often we find folks - even Christians - who can talk knowledgeably about a wide variety of subjects. They recite technical and intricate details about a host of topics. Yet these same people claim that the Bible can not be comprehended. Nonsense! With even a fraction of the same effort they have put into understanding computers, cars, sporting events and political matters, they would have become expert in their knowledge of God's Word. If they invested one tenth of the time they waste watching television, they would understand even the most complicated themes of the Bible.

It's true that you can't explain what you do not know. However, let us never use this excuse concerning the Bible. If we don't know, it's our fault. Get busy!

by Greg Gwin

“DADDY, CAN I HAVE A DRINK OF WATER?”

Let me tell you about little boys. They are like camels. They can play all day and never think about a drink of water. They can run around in the hot sun, and a drink of water never enters their little minds. But at night, as soon as their head hits the pillow, “Can I have a drink of water?”

One night my three-year-old and I went through our regular bedtime routine. I read him a story, listened to his prayers, gave him a good-night hug, answered a dozen questions, and finally after the fourth or fifth “good-night,” I slipped out of the room. Finally, after a long hard day, I could sit down and relax.

It was nice and quiet for all of five minutes, when suddenly, “Daddy, can I have a drink of water?” I knew

he was not thirsty and said, “Son, get quiet and go to sleep!” It was silent for a couple of minutes, then just a little louder than before, “Daddy, can I have a drink of water?” “Son, hush up in there and go to sleep!” He was quiet again, but it did not last any longer than before, “Daddy, *please* can I have a drink of water?” I could see we were not getting anywhere. “Son, if I hear one more sound out of that room, I am going to spank you!” You could hear a pin drop. The silence was thick. But suddenly he called out, almost as sternly as I had, “Daddy, when you come in here to spank me, would you bring me a drink of water?” Now I knew he was thirsty. How did I know? Because he was consistent and persistent. This is what Christ teaches us concerning our prayer life. In **Luke 18:1-7**, through a parable Christ tells us to be consistent and persistent when we pray. In this parable the judge refused to grant the woman's petition, but she was consistent and persistent, until finally the judge gave her what she wanted. Why? *“Lest by her continual coming she weary me!”* Some of the modern translations say, *“Lest she wear me out . . .”* She was consistent and persistent.

Jesus goes on to tell His disciples, God will grant the petitions of those who *“cry out day and night unto him.”* These are those who are persistent in their prayers. Maybe you have a prayer in your heart, and you have petitioned the Lord time and again on this particular request, but you have not received your answer; *do not give up!* Christ tells us to be persistent. Why? Because like the little boy and the drink of water, He wants to make sure we are really “thirsty.” Not for His sake, but our own. God hears our prayers; He knows our needs. Do not give up! Be consistent and persistent.

Jim Forrest, The Grapevine, Cove, Arkansas - Taken from the Lincoln Bible Reader

Misunderstandings Can Present Problems

Delivering a speech at a banquet on the night of his arrival in a large city, a visiting minister told several anecdotes he expected to repeat at meetings the next day.

Because he wanted to use the jokes again, he requested the reporters to omit them from any accounts they might turn in to their newspapers.

A cub reporter, in commenting on the speech, ended his piece with the following:

“The minister told a number of stories that cannot be published.”

James 3:2 *For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.*

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study
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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

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RON PECK

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS -
THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS
GOVERNMENT
JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON: THE DIPLOMACY
OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10