

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.

**September**  
**30**  
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## **GENERIC AUTHORITY**

*by Jim Stauffer*

When we discuss authority we recognize both general instruction and specific. Generic or general is defined as: having a wide general application; comprehensive. ((The Readers Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary)

This principle is not limited to Bible Authority but rather is a principle used in all aspects of life. For instance a wife can ask her husband to go out and purchase a dessert to complement the evening meal. She has given him free rein as to where he goes and what he chooses. She has left the choice up to him. Generic authority exists then, when the specifics are withheld by the one who authorizes.

Sometimes God does that with us as well. He tells us *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matt. 28:19,20) In this text going and teaching are two examples of generic authority. How we are to go is not specified. We could ride on the back of an animal, walk or in these modern times go by automobile, boat or airplane, etc. The mode or method of going is left to the one who is commanded to go. The same principle applies to the teaching. There are many different teaching methods that could be employed. We could use written materials, or teach in a lecture format. We could use various modern methods with lap tops, tablets or other ways of communicating information. The method of teaching is left up to the one who has obeyed the command to go and teach.

Notice the contrast with the specifics. When we go in response to the commission, we are to make disciples of those to whom we have gone. Further we are to teach them the things Jesus commanded the apostles.

Now that we understand the principle, let us apply it to other areas where some may have questions.

We are taught by God’s word, *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (Eph. 5:19)* In order to comply with this, *properly and in an orderly manner (1 Cor. 14:40)*, we must literally be on the same page. How to have the congregation sing together is left up to the congregation. The simple answer is to have each person in possession of the song to be sung, thus hymnals are used for this purpose.

We are taught from Scripture to come together for worship (Heb. 10:24,25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2). The specifics of where and how are left up to the local church. Nearly every climate demands protection from the weather. It is only natural to seek the shelter of a building. We therefore, are given generic authority for a shelter of some type where we can worship protected from the weather.

We have presented a few Scriptures and looked at a few examples that illustrate this common principle of authority. We apply it daily in all other aspects of life and now we see how it is done when it comes to biblical authority. In future articles we will look at other aspects of authority such as specific.

### **Elders, Leadership, and Authority**

**Berry Kercheville**

In my previous article, “Husbands, Headship, and Authority,” we noted the unique way in which the Lord approaches roles within his kingdom. When God spoke to wives, he commanded that she submit to her husband because *“the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church”* (Eph. 5:23). However, when the Lord instructed husbands, there is conspicuously absent any mention of him being a “head” or exercising authority over his wife. Submission is her choice based on her respect for the Lord and her

husband. If she chooses not to be submissive, she is sinning against the Lord, but the husband is not given permission to “exercise authority over” her or bully her into submission (**Mark 10:42-45**). His role is to lay his life down for her, which has the affect of drawing her in the same way the Lord draws us into love and submission (**Cf. John 6:44-45**).

The manner in which a husband handles his headship role with his wife is a biblical parallel for how an elder/shepherd handles his role in the local church. Paul drew a direct relationship between husbands and elders when he said, *“He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?”* (**1 Tim. 3:4-5, ESV**). Notice the phrase, *“with all dignity keeping his children submissive.”* The HCSB translates, *“having his children under control with all dignity.”* NET translates, *“keep his children in control without losing his dignity.”*

There are two ways in which a man could keep his children under control, but there is only one way he can do so with dignity. Some control their children with an iron hand. The children are obedient simply because they fear the wrath of their father. This is hardly raising children with dignity nor is it a picture of raising children *“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (**Eph. 6:4**). As fathers, our prime directive is to bring our children to spiritual maturity, training them to love God. We have failed our role if we have trained our children to submit solely out of fear of wrath or serve God primarily out of fear of hell. Paul said, *“The aim of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith”* (**1 Tim. 1:5**). God’s pattern of generating a restoration in Israel was to *“turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children”* (**Mal. 4:6; Luke 1:17**). While discipline is a key part of raising children, it must be mixed with shepherd-like fathers who generate love and respect by binding their hearts to the hearts of their children. While wives are not in the same category as children, woe to the man who has a wife who submits to him out of fear of his reprisals. This is not leading with dignity.

### **Elders and Authority**

God approaches the role of elders in a similar fashion as he does husbands. Just as God never commands a husband to “exercise authority” over his wife, an elder is never told to exercise authority over the church. Some would appeal to **Hebrews 13:17**, *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls...”* But just as **Ephesians 5:23** addresses wives not husbands, so this command does not address elders, it addresses Christians who are commanded to be submissive to the elders. Nothing in this text gives elders a directive to

take an authoritarian position over the flock.

Just as Paul was silent concerning husbands ruling over their wives, when Peter addressed elders (**1 Peter 5:1-4**), he not only did not mention ruling over the church, he specified *“exercising oversight”* and warned against doing so by *“domineering over those in your charge.”* Watching over the flock is far different from picturing oneself as having authority over the flock. In fact, Peter uses a series of contrasting statements: *“not under compulsion, but willingly”; “not for shameful gain, but eagerly”; “not domineering, but being examples.”* The opposite of being domineering is being examples. This is similar to Jesus’ admonition: *“those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you”* (**Mark 10:42-43**). Elders would do well to consider what it would take to be domineering. Some would never imagine it possible for them to lord it over the flock no matter how invasive they are in the life of the church because they see themselves as having the same rights as rulers or authorities.

This problem is solved by the word *“shepherd.”* It has often been observed, “cattle are driven, sheep are led.” What does a good shepherd do? *“He lays his life down for the sheep”* (**John 10:11**). And what happens when a shepherd lays his life down for the sheep? *“The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out”* (**John 10:3**). All of us who lead would do well to ask ourselves if this is the way we “manage our household” or “manage the church of God.” Am I treating the brethren with the same shepherd–gentleness I would treat my wife? Do I speak to brethren in the same loving way I would speak to my wife? Am I being controlling and making rules simply because it fits my personal desires? Do I understand that my prime directive does not have to do with exercising authority but in nourishing and cherishing my wife, my children, my brothers and sisters, and watching out for their souls? If I would not treat my wife this way, why would I believe I am permitted to treat the brethren in an authoritarian way?

If as a husband I believe I should *tell* my wife to submit to me, I need to first consider my own leadership style. Am I leading with the gentleness of a shepherd or as an authoritarian ruler? The same is true of elders. While there are some, whether husbands or wives, who refuse to be servants as Jesus was, godly people want to follow shepherd-like leaders. It is truly a joy. But just as citizens chaff under the dictatorial rule of political leaders, so disciples are wearied by authoritarian elders. The Lord’s church desires to submit to men who are powerful students of the word, full of godly wisdom, diligent in prayer, and who invest their lives in the souls of men and women. God has appointed leaders. God has appointed those to whom



we are to submit and obey. But the manner in which elders, evangelists, and others lead must not be *"as the Gentiles."* The kingdom of God is not made up of lords. As Jesus said, neither husbands or elders are given the right to *"exercise authority"* (Mark 10:42-45).

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## THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Any attempt to change the arrangement God has given for the accomplishing of His will must be challenged. Human institutions built and maintained for the purpose of supplementing the pattern God has given for the organization, work, and worship of the church are not permitted. We have no right to change the work of the church anymore than we have a right to change the revelation of God's will concerning that work (Gal. 1:6-9). Can the work God has given His people to do be carried out without any kind of centralized oversight? Although the following excerpt was written over fifty years ago, it still states well the basic problems faced in the matter of institutionalism.

Does a congregation have the right to assume more than it can do? Since brethren have begun to establish institutions they have vacillated between one plan and another of operation neither of which the scriptures give hint. If the Lord had intended that His work be done on a bigger scale than can be handled by the local church He would have designed a bigger organization. (The Gospel Guardian, p. 32, March-April 1936. The Problem of Organized Cooperation, by O.C. Lambert).

The church was planned, built, and continues to be guided by the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10-11). We must take heed how we build as we respect the pattern God has given (1 Cor. 3:10-11; Heb. 8:1-5). The church can accomplish its mission in the way God has prescribed.

The only organizational structure revealed in the New Testament is the local church. *"Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"* (Phil. 1:1). Each local congregation with its own elders, deacons, and members functions autonomously in accomplishing the work God authorized. Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Elders exercise oversight only within the parameters of the local congregation (1 Pet. 5:1-4) as they honor the Head. Constant appeals for a "sponsoring church" to oversee the work of an evangelist or a church in the "mission field" must overlook the fact that there is no authority for such. Often the sponsoring church takes the oversight of a work somewhere but has no intention of putting any of its own monies into that particular work and then there is the constant appeal for funds to do a work that it cannot do itself!

***Randy Harshbarger***

## A Forgotten (Ignored) Teaching

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman brethren in the twelfth chapter, *"Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,' says the Lord..... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* (19, 21) This seems to be a forgotten lesson of the Gospel. Why? I think it's because Satan wants us to be at each other's throats for one reason or another, any reason will do. This way, we will be too busy hurting one another to pay attention to our own need of forgiveness from God.

This is such an important lesson for everyone because, as Longfellow (I believe) said, "Into each life a little rain must fall." There will always be people, either through sheer evil or their own ignorance, who will do us wrong. It happens to all of us, sometimes we are on the receiving end and other times, regretfully, we're on the giving end. As Christians we are taught how to handle offenses committed against us by other Christians in **Matthew 18:15-17**. There Jesus limited our actions and here in **Romans 12:19ff** Paul consistently reminds us that we are not to seek our own revenge. That is God's job, and He will surely do so. In **Romans 13** he discusses God's appointed minister of earthly vengeance, civil government.

Wrongdoing against us DOES HURT! However, after the passage of time I should take stock of my life and realize my own responsibility for what is NOW happening in my life. I can't always blame the wrongdoer. Did they repent or apologize? No. Were they punished? No. Is that my problem? No! I'm going to make my life great! Will I succeed? Ask me in 100 years, but I am happy and free!

***Cleveland Reddinger***

In order to be a leader a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence the supreme quality of a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, on a football field, in an army, or in an office. If a man's associates find him guilty of phoniness, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. His teachings and actions must square with each other. The first great need, therefore, is integrity and high purpose.

***Dwight D. Eisenhower, Bits & Pieces, September 15, 1994, p. 4.***

**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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**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