

2016 Authority - Part 5 Taking Note of the Relationship

INTRO.: As we begin the fifth part of our series on authority, let's go back and review a couple of points we have made about how to take the New Testament and discover from it what we are to do as Christians and as a church.

I. Two important reminders:

- A. *We are looking for **COMMANDS** (both imperatives – Acts 2:38; and statements – John 3:16) and **EXAMPLES** (Acts 20:7).*
- B. *We are looking for the **SPECIFICS** of a command (what it limits – Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 – singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs) and the **GENERALITIES** of a command (what helps we might used in order to fulfil the command – Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 – song leaders, song books, songs projected on a screen).*

II. See all that exemplified in the account of Noah building the ark:

- A. *In Noah's case, he learned of God's desire that he build an ark through a command, an imperative – "Make yourself an ark" – Gen. 6:14.*
- B. *Note the specifics of that command – Gen. 6:14-16:*
 - 1. Of gopher wood.
 - 2. 300 cubits long X 50 cubits wide X 30 cubits high.
 - 3. One window at the top and one door on the side.
 - 4. Three decks.
 - 5. Suppose Noah was partial to oak? Suppose he thought mahogany would make a better looking ark? Suppose he thought that four windows would let more natural light in and two doors would get the animals in and out quicker? Suppose he took a look at the height and decided he could make the ark ten cubits higher, and then he could add an extra deck and put in an exercise room?
 - 6. Noah was limited to the specifics; he built the ark just as God commanded – **Gen. 6:22**.
- C. *But what about the generalities?*
 - 1. Noah could use a hammers, sawhorses, scaffolds, ropes and pulleys – whatever things he needed to obey the command to build an ark – as long as his use of those things did not cause him to go beyond the specifics of God's command.

III. Let's apply what we have learned about authority to our understanding of New Testament commands and examples, and the importance of understanding who a command or example applies to.

- A. *Begin with this note: In our third lesson we learned that when we come across commands and examples, we must ask who is being spoken to or about, and we must use our reasoning skills to determine who a particular command or example applies to. Sometimes that is easy, sometimes it is not so easy.*
 - 1. What makes that point especially critical in the area of the churches work, is that some New Testament commands are directed at our individual responsibilities as Christians before God and our neighbor, some New Testament commands pertain to the family relationship, some to the relationship of the individual and government, and some New Testament commands are directed at the collective responsibilities within the local church (what we do together as a local church).

2. So, when we read a command or an example, we must look at the verse, and at the context around the verse, to determine who, and in what relationship, the command applies to.

B. *Examples of commands that apply to individual Christians:*

1. **Eph. 4:25-32** – One of the easy ones – certain moral responsibilities.
2. **Jas. 1:26-27** – A passage often used to apply to local church collective responsibility, but is it really? Note the passage carefully, and you will see that it is describing individual responsibility.

C. *Examples of commands that apply to the family relationship:*

1. **Eph. 5:22, 25; 6:1-4** – Another easy one – individual responsibilities in the family.
2. Limited to the family. I have no right to demand that another man's wife submit to me as she submits to him, or that another set of parents' children submit to me as they submit to them.
3. **1 Tim. 5:3-9** – A clear distinction between the responsibility to caring for widows in the family relationship and the church relationship.

D. *Examples of commands that apply to the relationship between the citizen and the government.*

1. **Rom. 13:1-7** – Government's responsibility: reward the good, bear the sword and execute wrath on evil. (Note: History is filled with instances where the apostate church took this passage out of its context and bore the sword against evil.) Citizen's responsibility: Submit to the laws of the government, pay taxes that are due. (Can the church tax its members? No, this passage is exclusive to government.)

E. *What about commands and examples that apply to the local church's responsibility as a collective (what is under the oversight of the church's elders and deacons, and what is funded by the first day of the week contribution), especially in contrast to individual responsibility? Careful consideration reveals collective responsibility in three specific areas:*

1. Congregational edification (building up of the faith of the saved) – **Eph. 4:11-16**. Would include both teaching and worship.
2. Congregational evangelism (spreading the gospel to the unsaved) – **1 Tim. 3:14-15; 2 Cor. 11:8-9**.
3. Congregational physical aid to needy saints – **1 Tim. 5:9-10; 2 Cor. 8:1-4; 1 Cor. 16:1-3**.
 - a. Note: There is no passage that authorizes congregational physical aid to any but needy saints. What about **Jas. 1:27**? Remember, the context indicates that it is a command to the individual Christian.
 - b. What if individual Christians fail in their responsibility to orphans and widows? The answer is to emphatically warn individual Christians to obey **Jas. 1:27**, not to turn over to the congregation a responsibility that belongs to the individual.
 - c. What if a non-Christian shows up at our door? That I know of, there has not been one legitimate case of need where individual Christians have refused to help.
4. As far as I can determine, these three are the extent of the work the local congregation – as a collective, under the oversight of its elders and deacons, using funds from its treasury – is authorized to engage in.
 - a. Exercise classes? Social meals? Entertainment opportunities? All great things, just not the church's responsibility.

CONCL.: Let's commit ourselves to exacting obedience to God's plan and commands for every relationship – individual to God and neighbor, family, citizen and government, and local congregation.

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