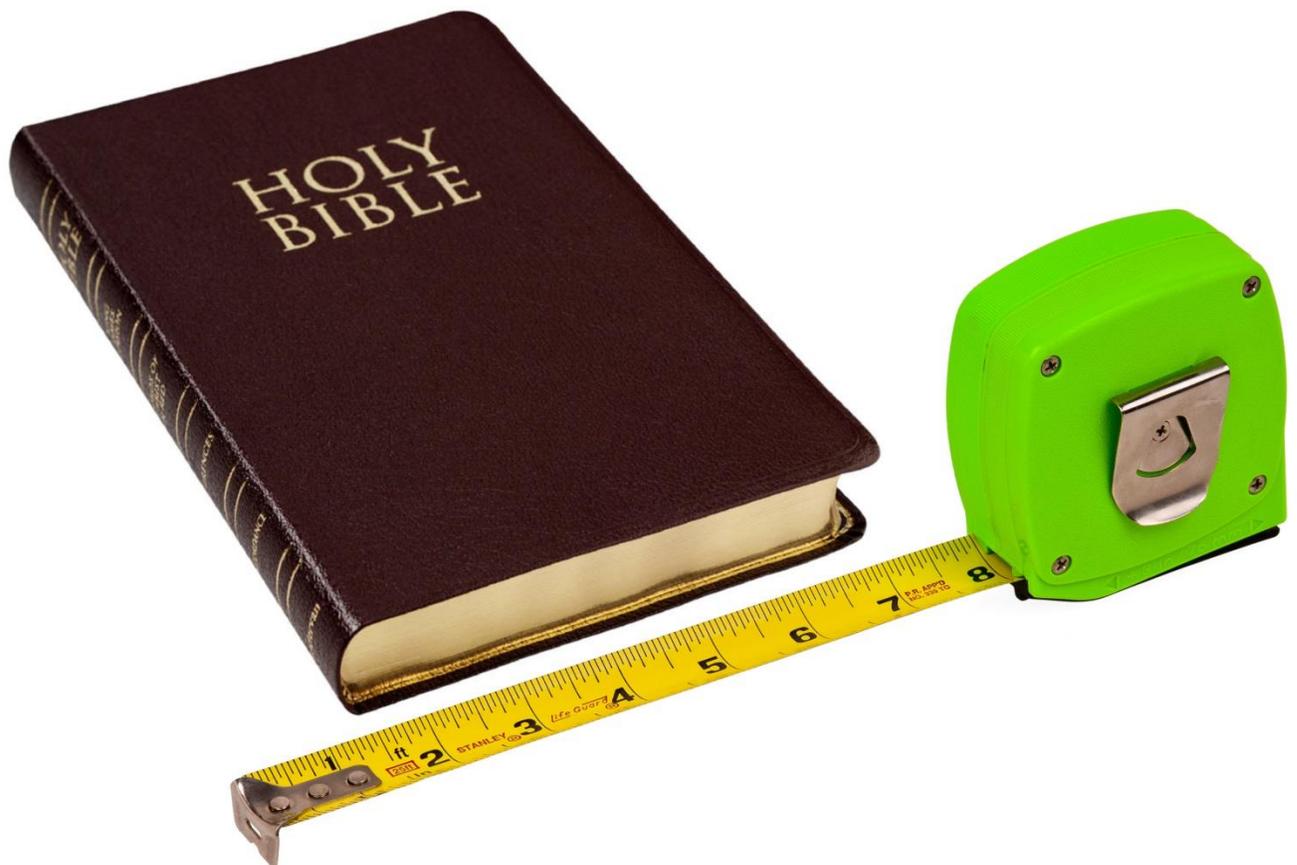


# GOD-SHAPED

*Respect for Authority*



**Sunday Morning Adult Bible Class  
January-March 2014 • Auditorium  
Taught by Jason Hardin**

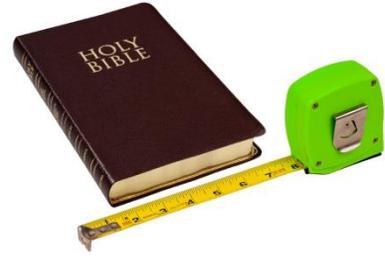
# GOD-SHAPED

## *Respect for Authority*

Week 1 (January 5 <sup>th</sup> )	What is Authority and Why Does It Matter?
Week 2 (January 12 <sup>th</sup> )	God's Authoritative Expectations in the Old Testament
Week 3 (January 19 <sup>th</sup> )	God's Authoritative Expectations in the New Testament
Week 4 (January 26 <sup>th</sup> )	The Catastrophic Consequences of Lawlessness
Week 5 (February 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	The Raw Materials of Communication
Week 6 (February 9 <sup>th</sup> )	The Nature of God's Written Revelation to Mankind
Week 7 (February 16 <sup>th</sup> )	The Intersection of Heavenly Authority and Everyday Life
Week 8 (February 23 <sup>rd</sup> )	When It's Time to Make a Judgment Call
Week 9 (March 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	When God Hasn't Said Anything About It
Week 10 (March 9 <sup>th</sup> )	Living in the Light of God's Authority as a Disciple of Jesus
Week 11 (March 16 <sup>th</sup> )	Worshiping in the Light of God's Authority as a Church
Week 12 (March 23 <sup>rd</sup> )	Working in the Light of God's Authority as a Church
Week 13 (March 30 <sup>th</sup> )	Traveling the Ancient Paths in a Postmodern Age

• SUNDAY MORNING (January 5<sup>th</sup>) •

# What is Authority and Why Does It Matter?



**A**UTHORITY (*noun*) — the power or right to determine, control, command, judge, or prohibit the action of others; dominion; jurisdiction.

You **interact** with authority every day. You **submit** yourself to authority every day. You **depend** on authority every day. At the gas pump. In the grocery store. When you look at a clock. As you use money. When you drive. As you leave the pharmacy.

You expect the fresh fruits and vegetables you buy to meet a certain standard of cleanliness and quality. You take for granted the fact that the prescriptions your pharmacist fills have been regulated and approved by a governing authority. Every single time you cruise beside someone on the highway or fly by another car on a narrow two-way street, you assume that all involved are going to abide by the regulating standards of lawful authority.

Standards of authority have power to teach, reprove, correct, and train. When different people with differing ideas, varying histories, and conflicting agendas agree to abide under a common standard of authority, unity of mind and harmony of purpose is possible. There is potential for peaceful and constructive coexistence. Disagreements can be settled and a clear vision for collective purpose and action in the future can be established.

For instance, if you are asked how long this line is...

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...what would you say? What would you do? Is there anyone who would disagree that we *can* come to a common understanding of exactly how long that line is? Is there any doubt as to how we could definitively reach an agreement? It's all possible by appealing to a common standard of measuring authority.

In the most basic of terms, how would you describe authority?

What happens when standards of authority are disregarded:

- At home?
- In school?
- At work?
- In society?

## God as the Ultimate Authority

With those simple principles in mind, carefully read God's communication to the Israelites in Leviticus 18:1-5.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD."

In Leviticus 19:1-2, he continued,

"Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."

It is a principle that is reiterated in the New Testament.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet 1:13-16)

Why would God act as if he has the right to define, command, prohibit, and judge? Why should we feel compelled to be as he is? Reasons from the Bible are not hard to uncover:

- ❖ He is the Creator of all things (Gen 1-2; Psa 33:6)
- ❖ He is the Giver of all good things (James 1:17)
- ❖ He is the Owner of all things (Psa 50:10)
- ❖ He is the Upholder of all things (Heb 1:3)
- ❖ He is the Source of our spirits (Gen 1:27; Eccl 12:7)
- ❖ He is the Founder of the nations (Acts 17:26-28)
- ❖ He is the Ruler of all peoples (Psa 22:28; Jer 10:7)
- ❖ He is the Judge of every person (Rom 14:10-12)
- ❖ All things were created for him (Col 1:15-17)

When our Creator describes himself as "the LORD," what is he communicating?

Take the time to reflect on God's words in Leviticus 18:1-5 and 19:1-2. What is he saying?

"You shall be holy, for I am holy." What does this mean and how does it relate to God's authority?

"All things were created through him and for him" (Col 1:16). How do these words inherently imply ultimate authority in relation to mankind?

Therefore, we ought not be surprised that he presents himself as “above” us.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa 55:8-9)

Which means...

**My feelings and hunches and goals are not the ultimate standard of authority.**

There is a way that seems right to a man,  
but its end is the way to death. (Prov 14:12)

**My past personal experiences are not the ultimate standard of authority.**

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (Matt 7:21-23)

**My relatives are not the ultimate standard of authority.**

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matt 10:37)

**The majority is not the ultimate standard of authority.**

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.” (Matt 7:13)

How does Proverbs 14:12 effectively establish that human feelings, hunches, and goals are an inadequate source of ultimate authority?

Why are past personal experiences a faulty standard of authority?

How could treating my relatives as the ultimate standard of authority place me in a dangerous standing with God?

*Vox populi, vox dei* is a famous Latin phrase that means, “The voice of the people is the voice of God.” Why is treating the majority as the ultimate standard of authority never a good idea?

**Religious leaders are not the ultimate standard of authority.**

And [Jesus] said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honors me with their lips,  
but their heart is far from me;  
in vain do they worship me,  
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:6-8)

**My own conscience is not the ultimate standard of authority.**

As Paul (formerly Saul of Tarsus) confessed,

“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” (Acts 26:9)

**God—the Creator, Owner, Upholder, Ruler, and Judge of all—is the ultimate standard of authority.**

And he has not left us to our own devices or imaginations.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** Why would God follow up his commandments, prohibitions, and promises of judgment with straightforward statements like those we read in Isaiah 55:8-9?

In Acts 8:30-31, Philip asked an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah the prophet, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The eunuch responded, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” Where is the balance between the blessing of learning more about God’s will from another human being and the danger of ascribing too much authority to that same human being?

What is a conscience?

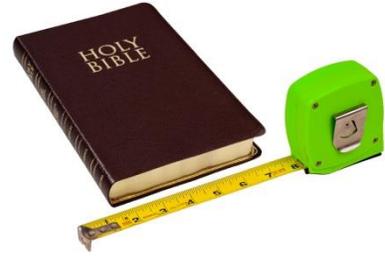
Are consciences reliable?

Can they be dangerous?

If so, how can I leverage my conscience for good and guard it from being misused?

• SUNDAY MORNING (January 12<sup>th</sup>) •

# God's Authoritative Expectations in the Old Testament



A great many examples of men and women who interacted with, submitted themselves to, and faithfully depended upon God as the ultimate standard of authority have been preserved for us in the Old Testament. These accounts have been providentially preserved “for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4). For instance,

## Noah, in Genesis 6:

- ❖ Was given the responsibility by God to build an ark (Gen 6:14).
- ❖ Did all that God commanded him to do (Gen 6:22).
- ❖ Was preserved by God (Gen 7:23; Heb 11:7).

## Abel, in Genesis 4:

- ❖ Offered the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions as a sacrifice to God (Gen 4:4).
- ❖ Was regarded as offering “a more acceptable sacrifice” to God than Cain (Heb 11:4).
- ❖ Pleas'd the LORD (Gen 4:4).

## Abraham, in Genesis 12:

- ❖ Was told to leave his country and go to the land that God would show him (Gen 12:1).
- ❖ Obeyed, as the LORD had told him (Gen 12:4).
- ❖ Was richly blessed and powerfully used by God (Heb 11:12).

In your own words, what is the point for Christians of Romans 15:4?

What “instruction” should be taken away from the example of Noah?

What “instruction” should be taken away from the example of Abel?

What “instruction” should be taken away from the example of Abraham?

But not everyone was willing to submit themselves to God in the Old Testament. Consider a few examples on the other side of the spectrum.

#### **Cain, in Genesis 4:**

- ❖ Brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground (Gen 4:3).
- ❖ Did not “do well” (Gen 4:7).
- ❖ Did not enjoy the regard of God for his offering and was reproved (Gen 4:5-7).

#### **Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10:**

- ❖ Were assigned the task of offering sacrifices to God with “authorized” fire (Exo 30:9).
- ❖ Offered “unauthorized fire before the LORD” (Lev 10:1).
- ❖ Were consumed with fire from the LORD (Lev 10:2).

#### **A man gathering sticks, Numbers 15:**

- ❖ Was to do no work nor kindle a fire on the Sabbath (Exo 20:10; 35:3).
- ❖ Gathered sticks on the Sabbath (Num 15:32).
- ❖ Was stoned to death by commandment of the LORD (Num 15:35).

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** In each case, there was some sort of **expectation** defined by God, there were **actions** on the part of the people created in his image, and there were **consequences** of those actions. When these people interacted with God, they were interacting with the ultimate standard of authority. By their actions, they either submitted to God as the ultimate standard of authority, or they did not. Either way, they enjoyed or suffered the consequences of their actions in light of God’s authority.

What “instruction” should be taken away from the example of Cain?

What “instruction” should be taken away from the example of Nadab and Abihu?

What “instruction” should be taken away from the example of the man gathering sticks?

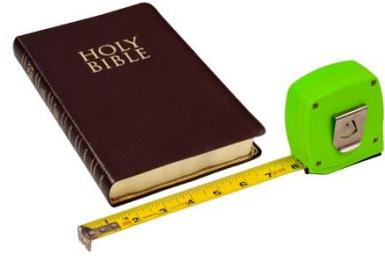
A simple pattern:

- Expectations of God
- Actions of people
- Consequences of action

What should we, as Christians, take away from this pattern that is repeated over and over again throughout the Old Testament?

• SUNDAY MORNING (January 19<sup>th</sup>) •

## God's Authoritative Expectations in the New Testament



**W**e clearly discover in Matthew 21:23-27 that the chief priests and elders of the people in Jesus' day appreciated the need for and even **expected** (at least when it suited their own purposes) a source of authority to back up human actions.

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Jesus, as he so masterfully did on other occasions, exposed the true condition of their hearts by raising the issue of the baptism of John. "From where did it come?" John needed authority for his actions, but who was the source of that authority? "From heaven?" Did God grant John the authority to preach and do what he was doing, thereby making it legitimate and authoritative? "Or from man?"

Clearly, there can be only two ultimate sources of authority—heaven or human. If heaven, why wouldn't we respond? If human, why couldn't we take it or leave it?

"By what authority?"  
What does that question mean?

If we are doing something "by authority," what is implied?

"And who gave you this authority?" What difference does this question make?

Is "from heaven or from man" still a valid gauge for modern discussions of authority? If so, why?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus **acted** as one who had authority. When he had finished his famous sermon overlooking the Sea of Galilee, “the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt 7:28-29). In Matthew 9:1-8,

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

But the clearest statement of Jesus concerning his authority was delivered after his resurrection from the dead, prior to his ascension into heaven.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:16-20)

From this point on, these appointed ambassadors of Jesus acted with an important measure of delegated authority.

Remember that Jesus had promised they would be guided by the Holy Spirit of God (John 16:7-14; 14:26; 15:26; 17:8, 14). They consistently proclaimed Jesus as their

What does it look and sound like, practically speaking, to “teach as one who has authority”?

Why did the scribes believe Jesus was guilty of blasphemy in Matthew 9?

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” Why did Jesus highlight the authority aspect of this disagreement?

What, in your own words, is Jesus communicating in Matthew 28:16-20?

authoritative King and head over the church (Eph 1:22-23), but they also made claims like this:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:20)

Those who say we need only to give heed to the words of Jesus would do well to remember his charge to his earliest followers in Luke 10:16. “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” Conversely, in John 13:20, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

In John 20:19-23, Jesus commissioned these specially chosen men with an awesome responsibility.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

Jesus sent the apostles—with authority—just as his Father had sent him. He commanded them, as the source of all authority in heaven and on earth, to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that they had received from him.

In Acts 2, Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed a great multitude of Jews with authority. Jesus had promised to give “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” in Matthew 16, and those keys were

In what way were the apostles of Jesus guided by the Holy Spirit of God?

When Paul wrote, “we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us,” what did he mean?

What should we make of Jesus’ words in Luke 10:16 and John 13:20?

authoritatively used on the Day of Pentecost following Jesus' atoning sacrifice to open the doors of access to God.

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:41-42)

From this point forward, the apostles' teaching was held as authoritative. They were commissioned envoys of the risen Christ—empowered by the Holy Spirit with “the good news” of Jesus and verified by incredible miraculous signs (Mark 16:17-18). Wherever they went, they proclaimed “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 4-9). In the words of the apostle Paul,

I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. (1 Cor 4:16-17)

If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized (1 Cor 14:37-38)

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:9)

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** The New Testament is not simply a “love letter” from God or an interesting but outdated historical document. We are interacting with heavenly authority as we handle the New Testament. It is the means our Creator has used to communicate his authoritative expectations to us. Will we submit ourselves to him? Will we depend upon him for guidance, correction, and hope?

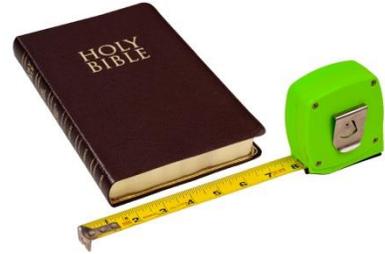
What were “the keys of the kingdom of heaven”?

“And these signs will accompany those who believe...” (Mark 16:17-18). What purpose did these miracles play in the days of the apostles?

“The things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord” (1 Cor 14:37). What right or basis did Paul possibly have to make such a claim?

• SUNDAY MORNING (January 26<sup>th</sup>) •

# The Catastrophic Consequences of Lawlessness



In Matthew 7:21-23, toward the end of his famous “sermon on the mount,” Jesus made some statements that are worthy of some in-depth attention at this point in our study.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

With these words, Jesus established a straightforward distinction between “the will of my Father who is in heaven” and “lawlessness.” There are image-bearers of God who do the will of the heavenly Father, and there are image-bearers of God who are workers of lawlessness. The first will gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and the latter will be told to depart from God.

It is vital, therefore, that we understand the difference between the will of our Creator and lawlessness.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Eph 5:15-17)

In our last session, we determined that the apostles delivered authoritative teaching as commissioned envoys of the risen Christ (Acts 2:42). What they delivered in oral and written form is to be regarded and abided within as the God-breathed doctrine of Christ (2 John 4-9). We are

How could anyone call Jesus “Lord” and still be guilty of lawlessness?

Why would Jesus respond, “I never knew you” to anyone?

In your own words, how would you summarize:

- Look carefully how you walk –
- Not as unwise but as wise –
- Do not be foolish –
- Understand what the will of the Lord is –

called to do more than refer to Jesus as “Lord.” The one who enters the kingdom of heaven will have put the revealed will of God into practice.

On the other side of the spectrum is “lawlessness.” In Greek, the word is *anomia*. *Nomos* in Greek is translated “law” into English. Add an *a* to the front of the word and it becomes negative—similar to the way many of our English words work.

- ❖ A theist is someone who believes in God. An atheist does not.
- ❖ A gnostic is someone who knows. An agnostic is someone who does not.

*Nomos* is “law.” *Anomia* is “lawlessness,” or some of our English translations render the Greek word as “iniquity.” To be guilty of “lawlessness” is to live outside the boundaries of the law of God. The people Jesus referenced in Matthew 7 will claim to have done a number of noteworthy things in his name—prophesying, casting out demons, many mighty works. And yet, in spite of their claims, Jesus promised that he will declare, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” As we established in our very first session, my past personal experiences or achievements are not the ultimate standard of authority.

Our understanding of the Bible’s use of “lawlessness” is deepened even further by the writings of John.

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we

Why would John refer to these Christians as “little children” in 1 John 2?

Practically speaking, what does it mean to “abide in” Jesus?

Why will those who have abided in Jesus have “confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming”?

In your own words, what does it mean to “practice righteousness”?

shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 2:28-3:10)

It's important to note the significant difference between John's use of the word "lawlessness" in 1 John 3 and his use of the word "abiding" in 2 John 9.

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

To be guilty of "lawlessness" is to live outside the boundaries of God's law, without God. To "abide in" the teaching of Christ is to live within the boundaries of God's revealed will, with God.

In our second session, we referenced an Old Testament example of "lawlessness."

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. (Lev 10:1-2)

What are the differences between "practicing sin" and "practicing righteousness"?

Why would John go so far as to declare that those who do not practice righteousness are "the children of the devil"?

In everyday terms, what does it mean to "go on ahead" and "not abide in the teaching of Christ"?

What is this "teaching of Christ" in 2 John 9?

Some of our English translations render “unauthorized” as “profane” or “strange,” and the implications are clear. The fire that was offered by these two sons of Aaron was “outside of” the boundaries of the law established by God. He had provided a pattern he expected the children of Israel to follow—specific days to remember and keep holy, specific feasts to celebrate in a specific manner, specific animals to sacrifice at specific times, specific individuals to represent the people in specific acts of worship, and service in specific ways. When Nadab and Abihu offered fire that was “outside of” the boundaries of the law established by God, it was described by God as “unauthorized,” “profane,” or “strange.”

And so, it’s not unusual to find exhortations like that of Moses in Deuteronomy 4:1-2.

“And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.”

Clearly, God’s people were to have reverent regard for those things which had been authorized by God and to abstain from those things which had not been authorized by God.

In the New Testament letter of 2 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul warned first-century Christians that the spirit of “lawlessness” was alive and well.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with

What do God’s prohibitions against adding to or taking away from his revealed will add to our understanding of lawlessness?

all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes 2:1-12)

When it comes to our relationship with divine authority, we will either be on the side of law or lawlessness. Passages like 2 Thessalonians 2 make clear what side we should strive to be on.

## **Other New Testament References to God's Standard of Authority**

Take the time to carefully read and reflect on the way the inspired messengers of the New Testament describe the will of God and our responsibility as his children, beginning with the words of Jesus.

“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” (John 12:48-50)

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Rom 6:17-18)

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Cor 2:12-13)

What can we learn from John 12:48-50?

What can we learn from Romans 6:17-18?

What can we learn from 1 Corinthians 2:12-13?

I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (1 Cor 4:6-7)

Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. (1 Cor 14:36-38)

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:6-9)

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. (2 Tim 1:13-14)

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim 2:1-2)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but

What can we learn from 1 Corinthians 4:6-7?

What can we learn from 1 Corinthians 14:36-38?

What can we learn from Galatians 1:6-9?

What can we learn from 2 Timothy 1:13-14?

What can we learn from 2 Timothy 2:1-2?

a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (James 1:22-25)

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 4:10-11)

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Rev 22:18-19)

When God's people are willing to submit themselves to God's revealed will and abide within the teaching God has provided, God's people can enjoy unity of mind and action.

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. (1 Cor 1:10)

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (Eph 5:8-10)

Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (Phil 3:16-17, NKJV)

What can we learn from James 1:22-25?

What can we learn from 1 Peter 4:10-11?

What can we learn from Jude 3?

What can we learn from 1 Corinthians 1:10?

What can we learn from Philippians 3:16-17?

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:16-17)

Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thess 5:20-22)

There is a Lord over all humanity. This Lord has a will. His will can be understood. To live in willful ignorance of or rebellion against the will of the Lord is lawlessness. And one day we will all give account for the way we have lived in relation to his will.

“Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matt 13:30-33)

Therefore, the words of God to Cain thousands of years ago still ring true.

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” (Gen 4:7)

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** James assures us that “the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing” (James 1:25).

What can we learn from Colossians 3:16-17?

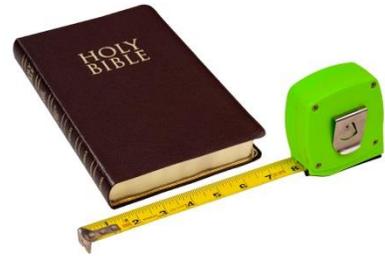
What can we learn from 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22?

In the minds of many, “law” and “liberty” are mutually exclusive. Why would James refer to “the law of liberty” as “the perfect law” (James 1:25)?

Why is the straightforward message of James 2:12 so foundational to our entire study of respect for authority?

• SUNDAY MORNING (February 2<sup>nd</sup>) •

# The Raw Materials of Communication



**C**ommunication can be defined in a variety of different ways: the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs; something imparted, interchanged, or transmitted; a document or message imparting news, views, or information.

Remember the foundation we've laid to this point in our study:

- ❖ What is authority and why does it matter?
- ❖ God's authoritative expectations in the Old Testament
- ❖ God's authoritative expectations in the New Testament
- ❖ The catastrophic consequences of lawlessness

If we're to fully grasp how God's authority translates into and impacts our own lives, it's important that we take some time to focus on the raw materials of communication itself. *How* does God communicate his authoritative will to us?

What might be surprising to some is that God communicates *his* will in the same ways you communicate *your* will. Doy Moyer has done some very insightful and helpful writing on this topic<sup>1</sup>:

There is no magic formula here. By understanding how we communicate at the most basic levels, we will understand how God communicates also. There is no special way of looking at communication when we study Scripture. People may buck against the idea of "establishing" authority, but the issue here is the same: How does God communicate His will? When we answer that, we've answered how His authority is made known.

In your own words, what is communication? When you communicate with someone, what are you doing?

Why might people be inclined to handle the raw materials of Scriptural communication differently than they would the raw materials of everyday communication?

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mindyourfaith.com/6/post/2013/12/its-how-communication-works.html](http://www.mindyourfaith.com/6/post/2013/12/its-how-communication-works.html)

How is anyone's will communicated? How do you communicate your will to someone else? If you want to communicate your desire that someone do or consider something, how do you go about it? The possibilities are actually very narrow and straightforward:

1. You **tell** someone what you want. This is the most direct form of communication. It could take the form of a statement or even an order.
2. You **show** someone what you want. You might go so far as to show them *how* to go about doing it. Illustrations and examples are a commonly-employed tool in this vein of communication.
3. You **imply** what you expect others to get by what you say or show. Gestures could be helpful; even silence could be leveraged to make the point.

Now, here's the challenge. Can you think of any way to convey what is in your mind to the mind of someone else other than to tell, show, or imply that information?

Moyer asserts:

This is logic at the most fundamental level, and the principles we are discussing here are what we would call self-evident. Something is self-evident when it is true in itself. Such is the case with tell, show, and imply. How can we demonstrate this?

It is obvious that any attempt at communication will utilize one or more of these ways of communication. Try to communicate without it! I would issue this challenge if you disagree with what I'm saying: go ahead and disagree, but don't tell me anything about it, don't show me anything about it, and don't imply your disagreement. To do so would be self-defeating, for you will utilize the very process you are denying. Such cannot be done, and we would logically collapse on ourselves by thinking otherwise. Tell, show, and imply are logically self-evident. No further proof is needed, and objections to this are self-defeating and logically incoherent.

Let's make this personal. Pick a moment in the last week that you communicated something to someone via each of these three avenues:

- When did you **tell** someone to do something? How did you do it?

- When did you **show** someone what you wanted? How did you do it?

- When did you **imply** something to someone? How did you do it?

Does this come from God or man? Since our ability to think logically and communicate comes from God, then it *does* come from God as the way communication works. It is, again, so fundamental that we cannot communicate without it. God made us creatures with the need and ability to communicate, and this is how it is done. To help us understand God's authority, then, we need to start with the logical premises and show that there is no way around how communication works. We are simply reminding people of the fundamental logic that underlies all communication, including God's.

## What About Commands, Examples, and Necessary Inferences?

Discussions of God's authority often revolve around (or at least involve) commands, examples, and necessary inferences (CENI for short). These are simply more formal, specific ways of saying "tell, show, and imply." The terms appeal to the very same process.

Again, from Moyer:

Therefore, when people complain about CENI as if there is something fundamentally flawed about it, they really are showing that the fundamental logic has not been thought through. This is exactly why we need to talk about it. (Note: I prefer TSI, as I'll refer to it, to CENI for the simple reason that it is more encompassing of the communication process – "tell" includes more than just commands; however, the point remains that CENI is just a specified way of speaking about the same process).

The problem is not with CENI itself. I would suggest that if we do a better job explaining the foundational logic of communication, there wouldn't be such a backlash later against CENI as some alleged man-made construct. It's not a man-made construct at all; it's the fancy talk for how communication works at the most basic of levels. God tells us what He wants; He shows us what He wants,

Let's think about this in relation to the Bible. Can you think of an instance where God communicated something to someone via each of these three avenues:

- When did God **tell** someone to do something? How did he do it?

- When did God **show** someone what he wanted? How did he do it?

- When did God **imply** something to someone? How did he do it?

and He implies what He expects us to get. It's up to us to think it out and think it through.

Consequently, I have, a few times, challenged those who don't like CENI. When challenged, they have typically backed up, admitting something like this: "Well, I agree that God communicates that way, but I don't like how it is applied." Now, you might disagree over some of the applications, but don't attack the principles themselves, for that is attacking the communication process, and it is self-defeating to do so. Start with a solid foundation.

## Hermeneutics

The acts of telling, showing, and implying are foundational to any form of communication. In fact, they are *inherent* to any spoken or written communication, not just to studying the Bible.

Another word often invoked in discussions of authority is *hermeneutics*, the process of interpretation. Once more, from Moyer:

It is what we as the recipients (readers, hearers) bring to the communication process. TSI, on the other hand, is inherent in what the communicator gives. That is, we, the readers or listeners, do not provide TSI; we take the TSI that is given to us and try to understand what that means. TSI, then, is not a method of interpretation; it is the material that we interpret. We might misinterpret it. We might fail to get out of it what is intended. We might make more of examples and inferences than we ought to. But it is nevertheless the raw material that we use in order to understand what the author or speaker intends. There is no getting around this. No one interprets anything that is not first told, shown, or implied.

What is told, shown, and implied are the bare bones of what we work with when we interpret. Criticizing it as a failed hermeneutic is to misunderstand it at the most basic level. Instead of criticizing it, let's recognize it for what it is (inherent in the communication process) and then deal with how we should properly understand the statements, examples, and implications.

It's how communication works, and how communication works is fundamental to the process of understanding how God communicates with us. Most of the time we just communicate. We don't usually stop and think about the process. For understanding how God communicates His will to us, however, sometimes we just need to start with the basics. What has He said? What examples has He provided? What is to be inferred from the material He has provided? It's up to us to properly interpret it all.

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** In 1 Corinthians 4:2, Paul emphasized, "it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." Our ability to reason and communicate comes from God. In our stewardship of these good gifts, we must humbly do all that we can in order to be found faithful.