

A Study of the Local Church
Lesson 2 – The Need to Find Bible Authority
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Introduction: How important is it to recognize and submit to Jesus as Lord?

A. The essence of the gospel is the Lordship of Jesus. (**Acts 2:36-38**)

1. κύριος, ου, ὁ strictly, a substantive of the adjective κύριος (*strong, authoritative*); hence, one having legal power *lord, master*; (1) in a nonreligious sense; (a) one controlling his own property *owner, lord, master* (MK 12.9); (b) one having authority over persons *lord, master* (LU 12.43); (2) as a form of address showing respect *sir, lord* (JN 4.11); (3) in religious usage, as a designation and personal title for God (MT 1.20) and Jesus Christ (JN 20.18) (*the*) *Lord*; translation of the Hebrew *adonai*, which in the public. – Friberg Lexicon

2. To call Jesus Lord is more than a name! It must be reflected in how we live. (**Lk 6:46**)

B. This is the distinguishing difference between the body of Christ and the religions of men. (**Col 2:18-19**)

1. The essence of denominationalism is found here. Does the Lord's church have a headquarters? Where is it?
2. As with everything the Lord taught, the subject of authority is considered too "radical" and out of touch with the "needs of this generation" by the worldly.
3. Are you in the one body of Christ? (**Eph 4:4-6**)

I. Jesus showed us by example how to respect the revealed will of God.

A. Must we have authority from God for everything we do we have the right to act when God is silent? Look at the repeated, emphatic response of Jesus!

1. Jesus whole life was focused on "doing the will of the Father who sent Me." (**Jn 5:19-21, 30**)

2. There was not a single thing Jesus did without the fellowship and authority of the Father. (**Jn 8:28-29**)

3. Jesus expects us to have the same attitude towards His word as He did to the Father's word. (**Jn 12:48-50**)

B. From these verses Jesus teaches us how to view and handle His word.

1. If we do not have positive authority from God's word then we do nothing!
2. God has given us "all things" for us to follow.
3. The respect we have for Jesus' word is the respect we have for Jesus.
4. Are you following the footsteps of Jesus?

C. Consider the implications of the inspiration of God's word. (**2 Tim 3:16-17**)

1. What does perfect mean? What does "every good work" mean?

2. What should we do when the Bible does not speak on a subject?

- a. Some say it is allowable as long as the Bible does not condemn it.
- b. Jesus taught us to do nothing that is not to practice it.

3. If we are allowed to act when the Bible is silent then I do not know of a single doctrine that is not compromised and made meaningless.
- D. God showed in the Old Testament that the silence of the scriptures is restrictive! **(Lev 10:1-3)**
1. What was strange fire?
 2. What did Moses say to Aaron that allowed him to accept the death of his sons?
 3. When only do what God has delivered to us we glorify Him.
- E. Consider how the New Testament teaches us the need for positive authority before we speak or act. **(Heb 7:12-14; 2 Jn 9-11)**
1. Why could Jesus not be a priest in the Old Testament?
 2. How does one “transgress” or “go onward” regarding the doctrine of Christ?
 3. A Christian will simply want to glorify God. He cannot do this without a proper understanding of authority. **(1 Pt 4:11; Col 3:17)**
- F. Some practical conclusions we must draw.
1. We must know if a teaching or practice is **authorized by God’s word!**
 2. Every Christian must be willing to give “Book, Chapter, and Verse” for any practice or teaching they engage in. **(Col. 3:17).**

II. Attitudes and arguments of those who reject the limits of God’s authority

- A. Some are boldly claiming we do not need authority to act. Many are attributing this approach as coming from men:

“Not surprisingly, our historic legalism has created legalistic hermeneutics within the Churches of Christ. Thus, before we read the first word of Scripture, we have already brought certain false presuppositions to the process. For example, traditionally, we in the Churches of Christ have looked at the Scriptures to tell what is authorized. But before we look at the Scriptures, we decide that the question is one of authority. But, you see, the Scriptures not only tell us the answer, they tell us the questions, and authority is not one of the questions addressed by the New Testament. It is, however, a doctrine invented by John Calvin and still taught by strict Calvinists. You see, the Campbell’s and Stone were strict Calvinists by education, and although they rejected the Calvinistic view of salvation, they did continue in the mainstream of Calvinistic hermeneutical thought.” – **Jay Gwin, “Do We Teach Another Gospel?”**

1. Not surprisingly brother Gwin includes within his description of “legalist” those who oppose instrumental music in worship. How can we know “if it is from God or from men?”
 2. How many who hold this position will fairly discuss it? Attitudes reveal hearts.
- B. Sadly, many preachers within churches of Christ will not be so bold. They will use other language that the hearer cannot understand.
1. **“Patternist”** - “It is time to admit that in our churches, a wide variety of people from all walks of life...simply do not find patternism and legalism to be meaningful themes” (p. 121). - Dr. Richard Hughes, “Reclaiming a Heritage; Reflections on the Heart, Soul and Future of Churches of Christ.

- a. Biblically the term pattern is equivalent to authority! (**Heb 8:5**)
- b. Is it legalism to take “every word” that come from God on a subject and properly apply it and stay within what is revealed? (**Mt 3:4**)
- c. If it is a matter of misapplied scripture then show where that is done!

2. “**Propositional Baconian**” - What has become sad is that current day CENIist deny the origins of their logician hermeneutic. D. R. Dungan gladly praised the origins of his hermeneutical method and quoted Bacon in his book on hermeneutics.

Dungan wrote, "... Bacon, to whom we are largely, if not wholly, indebted for this method of philosophy" (p. 82).

According to Dungan, the purpose of the inductive method is to report all the facts, "and from them the conclusion is to be reached" (p. 83). – **Discussion with a Christian Church Preacher**

- a. This kind of reasoning from scripture existed long before Francis Bacon.
- b. What doctrine does not involve logic and application? (**Jn 7:17**)

3. “**CENI Hermeneutic**” - Why does CENI consistently distort narratives, poetry, parables, doxologies, psalms, wisdom, personal correspondence, beatitudes, etc. into one monotonous invective? Why would any conscientious "common sense" Christian allow such distortions to go unchallenged? – **Discussion with a Christian Church Preacher**

Pattern puzzle pieces come in three shapes, according to Church of Christ pattern-seekers. Each piece bears the form either of an express command ("C"), an approved example ("E"), or a necessary inference ("NI"). But the picture on the completed puzzle is surrounded on four sides with a very thick border. According to the pattern-seekers, this means that every detail of church structure, worship, leadership, and ministry must be "authorized" by one of those puzzle pieces, or else it is unlawful. By their reckoning, silence does not mean consent. It means absolute prohibition ("S"). We will refer to this doctrinal system as "CENI-S," an abbreviation for "command, example, necessary inference" and "silence." – Ed Fudge, the Plague of Patternism

- a. CENI is a description of language. It is like noun, verb and pronoun!
Why object to these things?
- b. Does the Bible approve of following examples and drawing inferences?
(**1 Cor 11:1; Mk 12:23-27**)

4. “**We should read the Bible as a narrative.**” – or “**We should only preach expository sermons.**” – “treat the Bible as a narrative that tells the story of God’s mighty deeds on behalf of the world which he created, which he seeks to redeem and over which he someday will triumph when his rule is complete” (p. 186). Richard Hughes, “Reclaiming a Heritage

“I believe we should go back to the Bible – free of any shackles of doctrinal issues of churches of Christ – and just read it as a story (which is what it is). Not seeking to find justification or argumentation over some preconceived notion about righteousness,

holiness, patterns, etc. But, reading it as a Christological document (see the Art of Reading Scripture), I think we will be greatly enriched and many of our rigid rules will become more nuanced and refreshed. We may even drop some rules; and we may actually add some depth of commitment to the call to discipleship. As we do that, and as we begin to glean the true intent of this story and reinvestigate the real meaning of various contexts that have dominated us – in our issues – we will have done ourselves a great favor. We will not be propositional Baconians – nor will we be relativist postmoderns (though, to one degree or another, we will miss some points and probably lean in one or both of those directions at different times in specific instances). But, we will be Bible storytellers.” – From a preacher in a “non-institutional church”

- a. I recently hear a preacher in Auburn say that he would only emphasize the subjects that come from expository preaching.
- b. He likely will refuse to make applications to present day issues that flow from a study of scripture. I doubt he would oppose instrumental music because that issue is not specifically debated in scripture.
- c. Reading without personal application is vain! (**Heb 5:12-14**)

Conclusion: The essence of the work of a local church is found in an understanding and teaching of Christ’s authority? (**Mt 28:18-20**)

- A. Regardless of the current practice, local churches that do not believe and teach these things are in deep trouble.
- B. Without this foundation there is a coming fall. (**Lk 6:46-49**)