

Lesson 2 – How to Apply Bible Authority in a Local Church
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Introduction: How should we read the New Testament?

- A. There has been a radical shift in attitudes towards how we should understand the New Testament.
 - 1. Some question if the Bible is a perfect revelation from God.
 - 2. Some question if the Bible has a blueprint or a pattern for local churches.
 - 3. Some question if we need authority for all that we teach and practice in local churches.
 - 4. How we answer these questions will produce very different kinds of local churches! Our goal is simple! **(Acts 2:41-42)**
- B. This material is directed towards those who accept the Bible as the complete and perfect revelation from God. **(2 Tim 3:16-17)**
 - 1. If the Bible is from God then it is perfect for the purpose God gave it! **(2 Sam 22:31)**
 - 2. When we believe this we will carefully listen to God word. **(1 Thess 2:13)**
 - 3. This belief will be seen both in attitudes and actions! Do we know God's word?

I. Jesus taught the apostles how to handle His words

- A. Jesus came to fulfill and teach God's plan that was delivered to Him. **(Jn 17:4-5)**
 - 1. Jesus goal was to glorify the Father. How did He do this?
 - 2. He was given a work that He accomplished. Everything He did pointed to God.
- B. Jesus repeatedly pointed out that He taught and did nothing of Himself. **(Jn 17:6-8)**
 - 1. Jesus would only do those things that He saw the Father do. Without instruction He would do nothing! **(Jn 5:19-20, 30)**
 - 2. Jesus wanted His followers to understand that the Father delivered his teaching to Jesus. He wanted others to test the source of doctrine! **(Jn 7:16-17)**
 - 3. Jesus respect for the delivered words of God would lead him only to act when the Father gives instruction. Jesus would give these same words to us! **(Jn 8:28-32)**
 - 4. Jesus said He and the Father will "make our home" (fellowship) with the one who abides like He did in these delivered words. **(Jn 14:21-24)**
- C. These examples set by Jesus was instilled in the apostles. **(Jn 17:14-19)**
 - 1. The genuine words of God will be hated by the world.
 - 2. How did Jesus "sanctify" Himself? He did it in the passages we have read. He emphasized and lived staying within the words that God delivered to Him.
 - 3. Any study of the love of God found in this chapter is empty without a proper attitude towards the delivered words. It is more than a "narrative." **(Jn 17:26)**

II. Churches were established and maintained by the words delivered by the apostles

- A. Jesus worked by the Holy Spirit through the apostles. **(Jn 14:24-26)**
 - 1. The Holy Spirit would give a perfect remembrance of what Jesus spoke to them.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit would teach them additional things from Jesus. **(Jn 16:12-15)**
- B. Every Christian was to be taught the foundations God has given. **(Eph 2:20; 4:4-6)**

1. Consider the “one faith!” This involves both the words delivered through the apostles and our attitudes towards them. (1 Cor 4:6)
 2. In a local church if either the “one baptism” or the “one faith” is not taught and practiced then one’s fellowship with God is endangered. (2 Jn 9-11)
- C. The Apostles simply “handed down” what they had received from Jesus.
1. Pay attention when you see these words: “tradition, delivered and received” (1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3; Jude 3)
 2. There was a consistent teaching to be applied to all local churches! How have we received this instruction today? (1 Cor 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33-37)
 3. To fail to obey this “tradition” delivered from the apostles is to forsake Jesus Christ Himself. (2 Thess 3:3-4, 6, 12, 14)
 4. The early church carefully stayed within the apostle’s doctrine. If they had no instruction from them then they did nothing. (Acts 15:23-24)
 5. When an epistle was given to one church it could then be given to other churches and thus to all generations. (Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Pt 3:1-2)

III. How can we stay within the limits of God’s authority?

- A. We must be committed to only acting and teaching when we have positive authority.
1. Jesus limited Himself in this very way. (Jn 5:19-21, 30; 8:28-29)
 2. Jesus expects us to have this same attitude. (Jn 12:48-50; 17:17-19)
 3. This is how we glorify God and stay within His purposes. (1 Pt 4:11; Col 3:17)
 4. I then must give scripture (Book, chapter and verse) for my teaching or practice or give up that teaching or practice. We must have agreement on this principle!
- B. These truths represent a foundation from which we can build together!
1. There is more to applying these truths! Whatever difficulties or inconsistencies men may have in application, let us stay on this foundation!
 2. May God help us to keep our eyes fixed upon His delivered words rather than the inconsistent failings of men. (Rom 3:4)

Questions

1. How did Jesus handle the words delivered to Him from the Father? How did the Holy Spirit handle these words?
2. How did the apostles teach local churches how to apply these words delivered to them through the apostles? What is the first question they should ask?
3. What is the difference between those that limit their actions by staying within positive authority and those that are only limited by specific probation?
4. Did the apostles expect local churches to have a uniform practice in their beliefs and worship?
5. Can we agree to give scripture for a teaching or be willing to give it up?
6. How should we react when a man is inconsistent or has a bad attitude? Does that bad attitude give others the right to reject Bible teaching?
7. What are some of the major challenges we face in attempting to apply these truths?