

Sunday, September 22, 2024 am

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (33)

Bible Study (5)

How To Establish Authority

As we continue our emphasis on how God communicates to us (our need to study His word), we have begun a brief study of authority. In our last lesson we established the importance of authority. Today we want to talk about how we establish authority.

I. How we communicate

- a. As we examine the creation, we find that man is unique and the pinnacle of God's creation. Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that we were created in the image of God. What that means is there are qualities we possess that are unique to humanity. Some of those qualities include: our ability to think and reason; to know that there is such a thing as right and wrong (morality); our desire to know who God is and about eternity; the ability to invent, create and improve things; our capacity to appreciate beauty; our desire for preservation, and many other characteristics.
- b. ANOTHER quality that God has given us is the ability to communicate – not just simple things, but with understanding and specificity. He has also given us the ability to seek Him (Acts 17:26-27, Isa. 55:6, Hebrew 11:6, etc.). And He has revealed to us who He is (1 Corinthians 2:11-13). He has communicated to us His will and He has done so in the same way that we communicate with one another.
- c. In essence there are 3 different ways that He has communicated to us His will. 1) He tells us things directly; 2) He shows us what He desires with examples; 3) He implies what is expected of us, expecting us to think and rationally conclude what He intends. When we think about AUTHORITY, it is simply about HOW He communicates with us.
- d. These 3 ways are the only legitimate ways that we communicate to one another in society – whether you are speaking of family, work, or even community. In summary: 1) We tell others what we want; 2) We show them what want and HOW to do it; and/or 3) We imply what we expect them to understand by what we say and show them (with the information you receive you reach the expected conclusion).
- e. Consider these 3 ways as someone who is hired for a job: 1) Direct instructions – he is hired and told what his job is; 2) Approved example – he is shown what he needs to do by someone who knows (that is one who HAS authority); 3) Implied expectations – as he is shown his job, he might look around and notice what other are (and are not) doing. He can observe WHAT is approved and INFER that it is acceptable. NOTE: A DANGEROUS practice is to ASSUME that if something has not been specifically forbidden it is acceptable to do (i.e., silence). When confronted for why he did something he likely will NOT argue, “Well you didn’t say I could not do it that way, I assumed it was acceptable.”

II. How We Establish Authority in the Bible (CENI)

- a. Direct command or statement – something is directly stated, either something we are to do or NOT to do. Much of Biblical teaching is direct. You read the text and you know what it is expected of you.

- i. Mark 16:16 – What do we need to do to be saved? Believe and be baptized. A clear command that is emphasized in many place in scripture (by command, example and inference).
 - ii. Matthew 22:37-39 – love God and love your neighbor as yourself.
 - iii. Ephesians 4:25-32 – how we are to treat each other as brethren. Several things instructed.
 - iv. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – “pray without ceasing”. Clearly, prayer needs to be a part of our lives.
 - v. 2 Thessalonians 3:6 – the church is to withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly
 - vi. Hebrews 10:24-25 – we are to consider & exhort one another (our brethren) daily and to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.
 - vii. There are certainly other factors we need to consider, such as context. But this is God communicating with direct language.
- b. Approved example - there are examples (typically based upon a command) that show us HOW we are to carry out instructions.
- i. We are commanded to follow examples: Matthew 16:24 – “follow Me” (imperative); Philippians 2:5, 3:17, 4:9 – the things learned, received, heard and saw, “these do”.
 - ii. Luke 10:30-37, “Who is my neighbor?”. Jesus gave the parable of the good Samaritan. “Go and do likewise”.
 - iii. James 5:16-18 – we are to pray for one another. Elijah is given as an example.
 - iv. John 13:15 – after Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, He noted He had given them an example. Clearly, in context, Jesus is not establishing a ritual, but the point is that we are to serve one another (cf. Galatians 5:13).
 - v. 2 Corinthians 8:1 – Paul commended as an example the churches of Macedonia.
- c. Necessary inference – when you put facts together, there are things that are implied or conclusions that we can naturally reach. Like examples, these typically address HOW we carry out a command. Consider the following passages:
- i. Acts 17:1-4, we note that in Thessalonica, Paul “reasoned with them from the scriptures”, explaining and demonstrating that Jesus had to die. Paul appealed to scripture and reached clear conclusions. He EXPECTED them to get the point. Some did and some did not.
 - ii. Matthew 19:3-6, concerning divorce for any cause, Jesus addressed what Moses taught and reached God’s intended conclusion, “what God has joined together do not let man separate.”
 - iii. Hebrews 5:14, as we mature, “by reason of use” our “senses are exercised to discern both good and evil.”
 - iv. Matthew 16:5-12, as Jesus warned about being aware of the leaven of the Pharisees, He EXPECTED them to understand what He was talking about. He gave them some more “facts” but He wanted them to REACH A CONCLUSION (to THINK!).

III. **Some Biblical Examples That Combine These Methods**

- a. John 13:34-35 – A new commandment – love one another.
 - i. Jesus gave a command – love one another.
 - ii. Example – As I have loved you
 - iii. Inference – By this all will know that you are My disciples
- b. Acts 10 – Peter and Cornelius

- i. Cornelius is told by an angel in a vision to send for Peter who would tell him what he needed to do (10:1-8). Peter also has a vision (10-16) where God tells not to call unclean what He has made clean. Peter goes to the house of Cornelius and there teaches the first recorded Gentile convert – he obeys the gospel. Let’s consider Peter’s vision.
- ii. Direct command – 1) Peter is told, “What I have made clean, do not call it unclean.” He is also told to go with the men who Cornelius sent, “doubting nothing (vs. 20).
- iii. Approved example – Peter had a vision with the sheet being lowered (3x). God is using this example to teach His will.
- iv. Necessary conclusion - Peter is not told directly to go preach to Cornelius, a Gentile. (NOTE: Hints had been given to him while with Jesus – cf. Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20, etc.). As Peter considered all the facts, he reached the ONLY and proper conclusion – Salvation was available to all mankind, including Gentiles. That he reached this conclusion is implied by the fact that he took with him 6 men (vs. 23, 45, 11:12).
- v. Peter obeys, goes and teaches Cornelius. 10:44-48 - God further verifies His intent as Peter preached and Cornelius and his household were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues and magnify God. All were astonished and Peter COMMANDED them to be baptized (as they had done on Pentecost).
- vi. As Peter retells this (Acts 11:1-18), those who were presented with all the facts ALSO reached the conclusion that “*God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.*”

To be continued.

Sunday, September 29, 2024 am

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (33)
Bible Study (5-2)
How To Establish Authority (Continued)

We are continuing our theme, “communicating with God”. As we discuss the subject of Bible study (how God communicates with us today), we are currently addressing the subject of authority. To ensure that we glean from God’s word His intended message to us, we need to approach His word with the attitude that we CAN understand what He wants us to do and how He expects His will to be carried out.

In our last lesson, we established the 3 ways God communicates His will (what He wants us to do) to us through His word: 1) He tells us (either by command or statement), 2) He shows us by examples, and/or 3) He implies His will. By “implication” we mean, while something is not directly stated, we have enough “data” to determine what He intended. We noted that these 3 ways are the same ways we communicate today. And in reality they are the ONLY ways we present a message. You CANNOT communicate without doing at least one of these in some way.

To ensure we correctly interpret His message, we need to respect His boundaries (1 Corinthians 4:6, 2 John 9, etc.). We also need to use common reasoning as we examine the text. We need to think.

IV. More examples of CENI (Command, Example, Necessary Inference).

- a. We briefly noted John 13:34-35 where Jesus gave a command to “love one another”, He gave the example, “As I have loved you”, and He noted that WHEN we obey Him in this, that 3) others would infer/imply that we are His disciples (they expect it). Consider the “common sense” of this observation – if we do NOT love each other, how are we going to win others to Him? While loving one another might not be the ONLY thing we do, it is certainly a crucial code of conduct. Yes, it was binding.
- b. We also discussed Acts 10 – Cornelius and Peter, where all 3 methods were used together. 1) Peter was directly told to go with the men to Cornelius’ home “doubting nothing”. Also while he saw that sheet lowered, 3 times the Lord declared to not call common (unclean) what He had made clean. 2) He had a vision of a sheet lowered with clean & unclean animals and was told to eat. 3) He reached the intended conclusion that he was to go to Cornelius, a Gentile and he and his household were to be permitted to obey the gospel (Acts 10:28, 34-35, etc.).
- c. Consider also Acts 15 – there is more disputes concerning Gentiles being saved. There were Judaizing teachers who demanded circumcision to be accepted. Paul and Barnabas vehemently disagreed. They were sent to Jerusalem to discuss the matter (where the problem originated). When they arrived, the apostles and elders convened to discuss the matter. They presented the following:
 - i. Examples – Acts 15:7-11, Peter retold the conversion of Cornelius. He CONCLUDED (inferred) that it was unnecessary. He noted they were “testing God” with demands (implying God had never made such a demand).
 - ii. Example – Acts 15:12- Paul and Barnabas recounted their first missionary journey noting that many Gentiles obeyed the gospel and God NEVER demanded circumcision.
 - iii. Inference and direct statements – Acts 15:13-19ff – James puts all the facts together, noting the examples mentioned. He further quoted from the Old Law, Amos 9:11-12

where YHWH intended that Gentiles be able to seek the LORD.” Vs. 19, “therefore I judge...” (he reach God’s intended conclusion by putting together all that had been revealed) – NO! Gentiles do NOT need to be circumcised (become token Jews) to be saved.

- iv. Acts 15:22-29 – the apostles write letters and sent them officially (accompanied by designated men) along with Paul and Barnabas. In their response we read: 1) Vs. 24 – the apostles did NOT authorize the false teaching; 2) They stood with Paul and Barnabas: 3) Vs. 28- “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...”.
- v. NOTE that they stated their conclusion was AS IF the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, John 16:13, etc.) had declared this. So their inferences ESTABLISHED authority for what to do and not to do.

V. Some applications for today

- a. Consider the Lord’s Supper – why do we partake as we do?
 - i. The Lord’s Supper is commanded – Matthew 26:26-29, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26ff. NOTE: In actuality, the institution of the Lord’s supper as recorded in the gospels is an example that INCLUDED commands. Paul language in 1 Corinthians shows it WAS practiced.
 - ii. We have an approved example – Acts 20:7 – on the first day of the week. This is the ONLY passage that identifies when they partook of the Lord’s Supper. To respect God’s boundaries, we ONLY partake of the Lord’s Supper on Sunday.
 - iii. But how often? Many partake of the Lord’s Supper only a few times a year. But implied in Acts 20:7 is that it ought to be done EVERY Sunday.
 - 1. Consider Acts 20:6-7. Paul stayed in Troas 7 days. We are told in vs. 7, “*Now on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread...*”
 - 2. There is nothing to imply that this was a special Sunday (concerning the Lord’s Supper).
 - 3. We also have other “clues” such as 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 which notes that on the same day (Sunday), they were to take up a collection (which is why we only take up a collection on Sundays).
 - 4. 1 Corinthians 11:20ff points to the fact that this was something done often.
 - iv. That is why we partake of the Lord’s Supper every Sunday and use unleavened bread (which was a Passover requirement) and grape juice (fruit of the vine).
 - v. One might ask, WHY is this a binding example? Why is it not simply one example of what we CAN do? The answer is:
 - 1. It is a POSITIVE example that we KNOW God approves of.
 - 2. It is the ONLY Biblical example of when they partook of the Lord’s Supper.
 - 3. The fact that He has SHOWN us when to do this ought to be enough.
 - 4. FURTHERMORE, there is no further information (NOTHING said, shown OR implied) about this, so the safe course to respect the boundaries He has set.
 - 5. Because of this, we are limited as to how we can use it as an example.
- b. Consider baptism – why do we teach that one MUST be baptized to be saved?
 - i. Commanded – Acts 22:16, 2:38, Mark 16:16, etc.
 - ii. Example – The book of Acts is filled with examples of those who obeyed the gospel being baptized – Acts 2:41 (3000 on Pentecost), Acts 8:12-13– The Samaritans, The eunuch of Ethiopia – Acts 8:38-39, Paul – Acts 9:17-18 (22:16), Acts 10:47-48 – Cornelius & his

household; Acts 16:31-33 – The Philippian Jailer, etc. We also find examples of HOW they were baptized – Acts 8:38-39, Romand 6:3-4 – it was by immersion, which the Greek word actually means.

iii. Necessary conclusion–

1. It is an act of faith – 1 Peter 3:21, “baptism now saves us” was a conclusion based upon the example of Noah in vs. 20. It is a statement with the effect of a command. In vs. 21, we are told it is “the answer of a good conscience...” which implies faith MUST be present BEFORE we are baptized. Also consider Acts 16:30-33 where the jailer is told, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...” Then within that context, the jailer and his family are baptized at that very hour.
 2. Also implied, we do not baptize infants, because they CANNOT believe. Someone might ask, “What about the “household” of Lydia and the jailer (Acts 16:15, 34)?” There is NOTHING in the text to imply infants were present (or the term could be used accommodatively of those who were believers).
 3. We conclude this is water baptism: 1) Vs. 20 made reference to water which implies the baptism we are addressing.
- iv. Putting everything together we learn why we need to be baptized and how we need to do that.

VI. Why is this relevant?

- a. Understanding authority will impact HOW we approach scripture – will we respect its boundaries (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6)
- b. Understanding authority will affect HOW we worship God – what acts we are to engage in and boundaries (HOW) related to each act of worship.
- c. The purity of our doctrine (teachings, beliefs) including salvation, as well as the way we are to live our lives is established by the commands, examples and obvious conclusions we find in scripture.
- d. What we do as a church and how we conduct ourselves is established by what God has said to us in these various ways.

Authority for what we do is important. But its not just about WHAT we have permission to do, but HOW we do what we do. To respect God’s boundaries is the ONLY way to ensure that what we do is pleasing to Him. And we have shown in this lesson that these are the ONLY genuine and logical ways to establish authority. As we noted last week, much of our religious division is the product of failures to respect the authority of God’s word. Many mock the idea of CENI. But I simply ask: IF there is another way to legitimately establish authority, please let me know. BUT do so without: 1) telling me, 2) showing me, and/or 3) implying a conclusion by putting all the facts together.

What about you? Will you respect God’s boundaries in everything you do? Think about it!