

Establishing Bible Authority

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The New Testament constitutes the will of Christ, positively, perfectly, and finally revealed to man ([2 Tim. 3:16-17](#)). All that it authorizes is taught in its pages, and the sum total of its teaching on any subject is Heaven's Will on that theme. To add or subtract, change or pervert is to disrespect Heaven's authority ([2 John 1:9](#)). We therefore must be concerned with the methods of determining what is authorized by the New Testament. The questions of [Matt. 21:23-27](#) should be asked of every religious practice.

I. HOW TO ESTABLISH THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST.

A. The Doctrine Of Christ Was Taught By The Apostles And Practiced By The Disciples.

1. Often people have the idea that unless a command was specifically stated by Christ Himself then we have no right to be dogmatic in regard to it.
2. However, all the commands of Christ were not specifically written, for some must be learned through observing what the apostles taught ([Acts 20:35](#)).
 - a. Christ Commanded ([Matt. 28:18-20](#)) – "All" authority with Him; apostles were to teach what He had commanded.
 - b. (What the) Apostles Taught ([Matt. 18:18](#)) – They did not teach their own doctrine, but Christ's ([I Cor. 14:37](#)).
 - c. (And the) Disciples Observed ([Phil. 4:9](#)) – Heaven's Will is exemplified in the inspired history of the N.T. church .

B. Three Ways Of Establishing Scriptural Authority (Illustrated In The Lord's Supper).

1. PRECEPT (Expressed Statement)
 - a. By this is meant a direct, positive command expressly stated.
 - b. (Observance)–"This do in remembrance of me," [Luke 22:19](#); [1 Cor. 11:23-24](#).
2. EXAMPLE (Approved By Apostles, [I Cor. 11:1,23](#); [Phil. 4:9](#); [1 Cor. 4:17](#); [2 Thess. 3:6-10](#)).
 - a. The practice of the N.T. church under apostolic

guidance is authoritative.

b. (Day Of Observance) – "And upon the first day of the week....," [Acts 20:7](#).

3. NECESSARY INFERENCE (Inescapable Conclusion)

a. When a command is neither expressly stated nor specifically exemplified, it may be determined by a logical deduction. The word "necessary" should be emphasized, for things that are only "probable" or "likely" cannot be binding.

b. (Frequency Of Observance) – "The first day of the week....," [Acts 20:7](#).

(1) Compare:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,"

[Exo. 20:8](#).

"The first day of the week...to break bread,"

[Acts 20:7](#).

(2) If "the Sabbath day" means every Sabbath as regularly as it comes, why should not "the first day" mean every "first day" as often as it comes?

II. SOME THINGS MAY BE AUTHORIZED THOUGH NOT SPECIFICALLY STATED.

A. We Must Understand The Difference Between Specific And Generic Authority.

1. Specific Authority – the kind of authority wherein an act is commanded and the method or means of obeying the command is expressly specified. Therefore specific authority excludes human choice because any method or means of carrying out the command, other than what is specified, becomes an addition.

2. Generic Authority – the kind of authority wherein an act is commanded but the method or means of obeying the command is not expressly specified. Therefore generic authority includes authority for AIDS (expediencies) which are for the sole purpose of executing the command. These must fall within the class, kind, or order of the precept, example, or necessary inference of the command itself.

B. We Must Understand The Difference Between Aids And Additions.

1. Aids do not alter or change God's command because they fall within the same class or kind of the things commanded. These are authorized (made permissible) though not specifically commanded (therefore not essential).

2. Additions make a change in that which is commanded, for they fall within a different class or kind of that which is commanded. These are wrong even though they may not be specifically condemned ([2 John 1:9](#)).

III. ILLUSTRATIONS OF GENERIC AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY WITH AIDS vs. ADDITIONS

A. Noah Was Commanded To Build An Ark ([Gen. 6:14](#)). Had God simply told him to build of wood, he would have had choice as to the kind of wood. However, God specified "gopher wood," thus all others kinds were excluded. The tools were not specified with which to prepare the wood, thus they were authorized as aids to obey the command.

SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY → → →	PRECEPT EXAMPLE NECESSARY INFERENCE
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GENERIC	AIDS	SPECIFIC	ADDITIONS
1. Build Ark	Tools Necessary To Prepare Wood	"Gopher Wood" Gen. 6:14	Oak, Spruce, Gum, Pine (Another kind of wood)
2 Lord's Supper	Hour of the Day	"First Day" Acts 20:7	Monday, Thursday (Another Day of Week)
	Containers	"Unleavened Bread" "Fruit of the Vine" Luke 22:1,18	Cookies, Coke (Other Kind of Emblems)
	Place — Building Lights, Pews, Heat	"Do This In Remembrance" Lk. 22:1,18	Making A Feast I Cor. 11:20-34 (Another Purpose)
3. Baptism	Baptistery, Pool, River	Immersion; "Buried" Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12	Sprinkling, Pouring (Another Kind of Action)
4. Make Melody	Song Books, Lights	"Sing" — Eph. 5:19 ; Col. 3:16	Playing An Instrument (Another Kind of Music)
5. Elders	Local Business Meetings	"Feed Flock Among You " 1 Pet. 5:2-3 "In Every Church" Acts 14:23	Councils, Conventions Sponsoring Churches (Another Kind of Organizational Arrangement)

B. Christ Commanded Observance Of A Memorial Supper,
[1 Cor. 11:23-27](#)

1. "The first day of the week" is specified thus excluding every other day. However, the specific hour is not stated, thus any hour within the first day is

permissible.

2. "Unleavened bread" and "the fruit of the vine" were the elements used thus excluding all other emblems. However, the number of containers is not specified, only that they drink the cup" (contents), [1 Cor. 11:25-26](#). Individual communion cups are an aid within the general command to drink the cup."
 3. A building is authorized as an aid to obey the command to "assemble" for worship ([Heb. 10:25](#)) and to "break bread" ([Acts 20:7](#)). It serves as an aid for a local church to teach the gospel and edify its members ([1 Tim. 3:15](#); [Matt. 28:18-20](#)). However, since the church is not responsible for recreation and social pleasures, the church has no authority to build recreational facilities and kitchens. These change the kind of endeavor for which the church is designed ([1 Pet. 2:5](#)), and therefore become additions rather than aids, because they obligate the church in activities that are the responsibility of the home ([1 Cor. 11:22,34](#)).
- C. Christ Commanded Believers To Be Baptized. A baptistery, creek, or river may be used to fulfill this command ([Rom. 6:4](#); [Col. 2:12](#)), but to sprinkle is to do another kind of action and is therefore excluded as an addition.
- D. The Lord Specified "Singing" In His Command To Praise God With Music ([Eph. 5:19](#); [Col. 3:16](#)). Books, lights, song leaders, etc. are aids to help us sing, but none of these are a different type or kind of music. Instrumental music, however, is an addition to singing, for it makes another kind of music.
- E. God Has Ordained Congregational Form Of Government ([Acts 14:23](#)). To unite the church under earthly headquarters or centralize any of the work of several churches under "brotherhood oversight by a sponsoring church" is to rebel against God's pattern, for it would be forming another kind of organizational arrangement. Elders are to oversee the work "among them" ([1 Pet. 5:2](#); [Acts 20:28](#)), thus limited to local autonomy.

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