

Digging Deep 2018-2019 Study  
Authority

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## Introduction

*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.*

Chaos and eventual implosion await any business venture in which the lines of authority are not drawn with clarity. Words like “I thought that was well within my jurisdiction,” or “He simply superseded the bounds of his authority,” are spoken, not in situations of triumph and success, but rather on days when there’s a problem.

You know of homes in which the children seem to run the parents and schedule. You know of families in which no consistent system of authority is maintained; where appropriate discipline is not administered. You know that’s not a place characterized by serenity. You know the situation begs for the respect of authority.

We’re aware that there is civil unrest in many areas of our world today due to the usurpation of authority and/or the lack of respect for it. We’ve witnessed in horror the chaos and violence of the overrunning of established authority. Our world needs a healthy respect for God’s delegated authority in our homes, schools, communities, states and nation.

This year’s study is a much-requested topic about how we get authority (or permission or the sanction of God) for what we practice, spiritually and morally. Can we know what God approves today? Obviously, there were times in the Old Testament when God’s people were punished severely for veering from a pattern of worship or service. (I’m thinking Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10 or Uzzah in II Samuel 6.) But what about today? Are the lines of authority fuzzier and grayer now? Is there a pattern to which we must adhere today in our worship practices and as we serve Him, or are the mechanics of our service immaterial, so long as our hearts are filled with awe of Him and love for Him and for one another? Does our view of authority really even matter?

It’s our quest this year to come to a better understanding of Biblical authority. It’s my prayer that we can study reverently and practically and that, in the end, we can be equipped to examine worship and life practices for ourselves, in light of God’s Word, and make decisions about how to please Him in all that we do. I’m convinced there will be matters of judgment at the end of the day—some practices about which we will have to honor the best judgment of our fellow-Christians as they seek to please the Father. But matters of faith will surface, too. The examination of both and how we know which is which is crucial to this study.

As we look to do all in His name, may we remember that, while He is our Savior, He is also our Lord. And may we remember that He is the sacrificial lamb (John 1:29), but He is also the lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5).

## MONTH 1

The concept of ownership is basic to any study of authority. We live in a society of self-ism. While it seems more correct to call it a selfish world, it's more accurate to say we are given to an ideology that places each individual as the ultimate end of all things. That makes it more of an "ism" than an "ish." (He is foolish means he is like a fool. That was an outlandish idea means that it was like something from another world. But *ism* means *given to the idea of*, as in Marxism or Darwinism or deism.) Selfism, then, accurately describes an ideology that is pervasive in our society. Many are given to self, even to the point of rebelling against any imposed authority in matters of religion. Are we accountable to absolute spiritual authority? The answer to that important question is the subject of this month's study. What is the origin of ultimate authority? If God has inherent authority over me, what are the spiritual implications of such? What does submission to this authority look like in my world?

1. Read Romans 6. In this discussion of spiritual servanthood, find and highlight the passage that crystallizes my only two choices about servanthood. Then find and highlight the two verses that state the wages of each choice.
2. Now read and contemplate the foundational account in Genesis 1 and 2. In one succinct sentence, give the primary (first) reason that God can claim absolute ownership of you
3. Now read the following "ownership Psalms": Psalms 89, 24, 50, 104, 95, and 74. Highlight the verses that clearly state ownership of you or of something that is necessary for your earthly life.
4. Take two study periods to read and absorb the following article:  
<https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=9&article=2143&topic=90>, entitled *Secular Humanism and Evolution*, by Caleb Colley. In this article what word is used to describe the idea that I am not owned by any Creator? From your own thoughts, list three important inferences you can make about your choices in life if there is no such thing as "Creator ownership" (Good podcast or group discussion):
5. Now read the following accounts and compose a succinct sentence noting the second reason God owns Christian people. What happened in between the first ownership and the second ownership that made the second one necessary? Here are the passages: Matthew 26-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24; and John 17-20. Read I Corinthians 6, keeping an eye out for a purchase. What has been bought and what is the price?
6. In view of the above study, list two senses in which you are an owned woman:
7. Finally, in a paragraph, connect the dots between ownership and authority, using some parallel from everyday life. Examples: "Why You Can't Go through My Purse" or "The Responsibility that Comes with Inheritance Upon the Death of a Parent" or "Why Your Mom Can't Do your Homework for You." All of these and any number of other titles can explain why ownership implies authority.

**Practically Speaking:** Choose one person under whose authority you serve (policeman, elder, instructor, employer, etc...) and express appreciation in writing or verbally for the way he/she executes authority in his/her position.

## MONTH 2

### *Does Christ have authority over me, too? (PART 1)*

It is extremely crucial to our salvation that we understand and are able to draw a connecting line of authority all the way from creation-to Christ-to the New Testament writings. If Christ is, indeed, our Creator, then He has the authority to tell us what to do, because authority is inherent in ownership. Is His authority equal to the Father's as He declares it to be in John 5:23? Does He have the right to view us as His slaves? Does He have the right to give us His Will and expect our complete obedience? Further, did Jesus transfer this divine authority to others, before He left the earth? Can we be sure that the epistles, for instance, are really the authoritative words of God? These are questions we will explore in month two of this study.

1. Do a little research on the Hebrew term for God in Genesis 1:1. Is this word in a singular or plural form? Review Genesis 1-3 and find at least two more verses that indicate, even in the English translation, that "God" is plural (thus, including Jesus as Creator).
2. Read John 1. Write out the verses below that clearly state that Christ was active in the creation of the universe.
3. Read Hebrews 1. Find two verses in this chapter that point to Christ as Creator, thus owner (as established last month in our study of maker=owner). While you are in this chapter, try to also find a verse that points to Jesus as the One who is holding our universe together.
4. Now read the book of Colossians. From this book, list each verse that clearly establishes the authority of Jesus over the lives of Christians (saved people) today. I believe you will find about 6 of these verses in chapter one, about 5 of them in chapter two, 3 in chapter three, and 1 in chapter four. Let's see if we come up with the same passages.
5. Now read Hebrews in its entirety and list the designations we could give to Christ from this book alone. (Some are characterizations He has because He is God. Some are characterizations He chose when He became man.) I'll do the first chapter for you, so you will "get the hang" of what we are looking for. (What a chapter of praise for Christ, above angels, are these 14 verses!) I know this is quite an assignment to find these in all 14 chapters, but we will appreciate the authority of Christ more completely at the end of this search. We will be more aware of our need to simply obey Him, even when we find it difficult to do. This study is the crux of practical ramifications of His authority.

#### Chapter One:

Voice of God (verse 2)

Heir of all things (Verse 2)

Brightness of God's glory (verse 2)

Participant in creation of the worlds (verse 2)

Brightness of God's glory (verse 3)

Image of God's substance (verse 3)

Sustainer of all things (verse 3)

Purifier of sins (verse 3)

Throne sharer (verse 3)

Heir of a better name than angels (verse 4)

Son of God (5)

First begotten of God (verse 6)

Object of angels' worship (verse 6)

King on everlasting throne (verse 8)

Holder of the scepter of righteousness (verse 8;

Be sure to notice Genesis 49:10 here,  
too)

Lover of righteousness (verse 9)

Hater of iniquity (verse 9)

Anointed One above all peers (verse 9)

Layer of earth's foundation (verse 10)

Maker of heavens (verse 10)

Remaining One (verse 11)

Unchanging One (verse 12)

**Practically Speaking:** Choose a favorite characterization of Jesus in Hebrews from your list and memorize the passage that contains it.

## MONTH 3

### *Does Christ have authority over me, too? (Part 2)*

Upon assimilating this material (and I know I am just putting it together, rather than really writing anything), I wanted to get most of the thoughts and passages about the authority of Jesus in one month's study. I now know I am skimming the surface and still am hard-pressed to fit this into two months of our study. But it's important. Recognizing Him as the Author of our salvation and of our faith (as you should have listed last month from Hebrews) is the prerequisite to bowing down before His holy Will in all aspects of our lives. It is absolutely essential that we are able to connect our way from His initial ownership of us because of His creation of our universe, all the way to the transfer of revelatory authority to those men who would finish writing our New Testament. We have nothing in the Word for our lives today if we cannot be sure that the epistles, which give us the pattern for Christianity, are authoritative—breathed of God. But we can know. Let's dig.

1. Read Philippians 2 and find what was purposefully emptied by Jesus. What was then given by God in verse 9? Then find the four verbs in verses 10-12 that denote the proper reaction to this emptying and giving.
2. Now Read John 17 and find Jesus' mention of this power or authority that God gave Him. When you find this verse, notice the reason that Jesus notes for this bestowal of authority.
3. Find at least one example of Jesus' power over demons and one of His authority over angels from the gospel of Matthew. You can use your concordance for this. (Hint: Don't skip over a possessive reference in Matthew 13.)
4. Read Matthew 21-22 in search of two instances in which Christ showed his authority over animals. Cite these here. (Notice Christ upheld delegated authority in this passage as well, even if such authority was not righteous. Cite those verses, as well.)
5. Read the gospel of Mark. Complete the following chart, putting verse numbers in the appropriate boxes in the chart on the next page.



Mark	authority noted in teaching	authority over demons	authority over sickness	authority to forgive sins	authority over apostles	authority over nature	authority over death	authority over food supplies	authority pronounced from heaven
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									

6. The important question remaining is this: Did Christ place His authority in those men who wrote the New Testament? Is the New Testament our binding authority today? There are numerous passages that confirm that He did transfer this authority. Let's read Matthew 10, Mark 13 and Luke 12 and highlight the passages that affirm this. Then read I Thessalonians 4 and II Thessalonians 3. From each of those chapters, find two passages that show us that Paul claimed divine authority for what he wrote. Bonus points this month are for those who find additional passages showing that Christ's authority lives in the entirety of the New Testament. These additional proofs are great podcast or group discussion treasures.
7. My favorite nugget from the study this month is an intriguing little study about right hands and the symbol of authority involved in the right hand. Read Genesis 49 and find out who had an objection about which boy was at the right hand of Jacob as he lay dying. Then find two verses in Exodus 15 that demonstrate there is power or authority at the right hand of God. Next read, Psalms 16-21 and Psalms 44, 48, 60, 89, 98, 108, 110, 118, 138, and 139. As you read, make a note of every reference to the right hand of God. Finally, use

your concordance and find at least three references to the right hand in the book of Isaiah. Choose verses that indicate that the right hand is a tool or place of God's authority, force or power.

8. Notice what Jesus said about the right hand of power during his mock trial before the high priest. This is found in Mark 14:62, in Matthew 26:64 and in Luke 22:69. The Greek word for *power* here is *dunamis*, meaning force and usually indicating the miraculous. (It is the Greek word from which we get the English word *dynamite*.) In this context, of course, it does denote miraculous power. But what greater authoritative force can be described than the miraculous force of a Savior sitting on the right hand of God and then being dispatched to come in the clouds to receive His own into glory? Jot one of these verses about the right hand of power down for your refrigerator verse this month. Then, finally, notice the conversation that occurred between the apostles about the coveted authoritative positions on the right hand and the left hand in the kingdom. Read this in Mark 10:35-45. Notice here that James and John wanted the seats on both the right hand and the left hand of Jesus in his upcoming kingdom. Still we know this was a discussion about authority from verses 42 and 43. They wanted positions of authority in the kingdom. The word for "authority" in verse 42 is a form of the Greek word *exousia* (translated in the KJV 69 times as power and 29 times as authority). They were vying for the elite position in his kingdom, But Jesus already knew who would be at the right hand of the throne in the new kingdom, as we have just demonstrated. Do you think He was chuckling on the inside to think that they were asking for His own position, where even now He is waiting till all His enemies become His footstool? Note passages in Acts 2, in Hebrews 1 and in Hebrews 12, where Jesus is identified as the One who has the right hand seat. Jot those here:

Practically Speaking: This month, make a card with your right handprint or your child's right handprint and include the words from Psalm 16:11. Send or deliver this card to someone who needs encouragement. You can use ink or paint, or you can cut from fabric or just draw around the right hand.

## MONTH 4

### *What's with all the Rebellion?*

Sometimes people trip up on sin. It's true. There are times when the devil blind-sides us with temptation for which we are unprepared. He is crafty and powerful and there are times when, though our hearts are still tender to truth and our motives are not evil, we find ourselves doing what we do not want to do. It's not that there's not an escape for whatever particular temptation we face (I Cor. 10:13); it's more that we are in a weakened spiritual state and we fail to expend the necessary effort to find that escape and resist the devil. I think the sin of Abraham in his "giving in" to Sarah and taking the handmaiden, Hagar, to bear seed, might be characterized as a sin committed in weakness, rather than rebellion against God. The sin was still sin and had grave consequences in many lives and they have continued even down through the history of this world. But, in the beginning, I tend to believe Abraham became faithless rather than rebellious. Hebrews 11:8-19 is a passage that leads me to believe Abraham, while failing on several fronts, was a man of faith through it all.

Presumptuous or rebellious sin is the sin I commit with my eyes wide open. I know I am choosing to disobey, but I do it anyway. I understand the command or the prohibition. Even so, I think about it and purposefully choose my way instead of His. I simply make a decision to do what I want to do rather than what He wants me to do. I know I am transgressing and I do it anyway. Sometimes I even do it with flair. I want to show people that I am a rebel. Sometimes I do it with secrecy. But, in any event, I presume to take my own route instead of the way that has been plainly set before me by God. I see the escape route, in this case, but I do not choose it.

Our culture is one of rebellion. We now know that babies are fully genetically engineered at conception. Their hearts are beating and providers routinely see the sucking of thumbs and the beating of hearts and yet they choose, eyes wide open, to destroy that life. Congressmen and women can get their hearts' permission to shout out a vote for the killing to continue. That's presumptuous.

Rioting has become the order of the day when we disagree with some political agenda or see that someone has been treated in an unjust manner. Ensuing violence to innocents or looting of unrelated property by those who wish to make a political statement is a decision to rebel against authority. Many are teaching their children to openly disrespect the law, the flag, and the country. Sometimes the words we hear are "We are standing for justice," when, in reality, the "stand" is against law and order.

When a soldier makes a decision to defect to the other side, when a Christian makes a decision to attend a dirty movie with full pre-viewing knowledge of content, when a banker decides to embezzle funds and plots his times and opportunities, when a wife sets up a meeting with someone she has met online for the purpose of adultery, when a lawyer decides ahead of time that he will lie in court... all of these are done purposefully in rebellion to the system of authority, whether it be the law of the land or the will of the Lord. They are presumptuous sins.

Anytime people think and act as if they are above the law, whether it be law enforcement officials, men and women in governing positions, criminals who are scheming ahead, or God's people who are purposefully violating His Will, it is rebellion. When we simply decide we are going to do the opposite of what is required, it is rebellion.

Let's further notice that rebellion can occur even if we are doing it in the name of some socially acceptable cause or in the name of tolerance or justice. This will become clear as we study. (I cannot rebel against the laws preventing violence in my quest to protect the unborn. I cannot damage property and steal in my zeal for social justice.)

It is impossible for a culture to become proud and rebellious without that negative spirit affecting the people of God in that culture. It will place temptation in their paths. This month's digging will examine how I can

presume to pit my own selfish will against the authority of God and how that collision with the ultimate authority of God has negative consequences every time.

1. We will define the word presumptuous, for our purposes, as “a brazen or arrogant failure to respect appropriate or lawful limits or regulations.” Read 2 Peter 2 and find the verse that describes people as presumptuous (KJV). If you are reading from the ASV, your word is “daring.” From the ESV? ...Bold and willful. Write this verse from two different versions below.
2. Contextually, let’s examine the passage above:
  - a. These people are described as “unjust” in verse 9. The word is a negative participle, which, by extension, means “wicked.” For what event is the Lord reserving these people? In the context, such people are compared to what Old Testament group?
  - b. Was immorality involved in the described rebellion? How do you know?
  - c. Was insubordination to authority an earmark of presumption? How do you know?
  - d. These people are destructive, as we see from verse 12, and sometimes they act like animals. Can you think of an example of events in the Bible or in recent history in which people acted like animals? Jot down those events here. This will make for a good group discussion.
  - e. “In their destruction, they will surely be destroyed” (vs. 12). Do you know of someone who has been killed as a result of rebelling against God? I think we could look at rioting and looting, schools shootings, armed theft, etc...in current news stories and we would quickly see deaths occurring frequently (prior to the execution of the system of justice) to the perpetrators of such crimes. Are there some of these criminals who would claim to be fighting for “good” causes? Which ones might be, in their own minds, protesting evil? What is the ultimate destruction for such destroyers?
  - f. According to verse 13, in what do these people take pleasure? Also note that they blaspheme about things of which they really are ignorant.
  - g. This verse also mentions that these people “sport themselves with their own deceiving” (KJV) or “revel in their deceptions” (ESV). Barnes says this means more accurately “that they take advantage of their views to live in riot and luxury. Under the garb of the Christian profession, they give indulgence to the most corrupt passions.”<sup>1</sup> Are there people today who use the name of Christ (or righteous descriptive nouns like justice, tolerance, kindness, non-judgment, etc...) as banners for reveling and destruction? How so?
  - h. Look at verse 14. How is covetousness involved in many rebellious activities? List crimes that are common today that are directly tied to covetousness.
3. Numbers 15:27-31 is an amazing peek into the heart of God and the distinction that is there between the man who sins ignorantly and the man who sins presumptuously. Study that passage and contrast:

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<sup>1</sup> Barnes, Albert; *Barnes on the New Testament, James-Jude*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1958

The man who sinned in ignorance:	The man who sinned presumptuously:
a sacrifice	cut off from people
an atonement	iniquity will be on him
forgiveness	

Now take the time to finish reading this chapter (Numbers 15). Why was a man executed in a painful way in this chapter? Why was a blue band to be sewn on the borders of the clothes of the children of Israel after this occurred? What were they not to seek after (KJV) or follow (NKJV) ? How do these seekings or followings lead to rebellion?

4. Now read the entirety of Numbers 13-15 and let's notice the progression of rebellion and the context of the distinction God articulated in 15: 27-31. What did Caleb and Joshua say in chapter 14 that makes us know the failure to go up and take Canaan at this time was rebellion?

What did the Lord say in chapter 14 that assures us that he considered this failure to act a provocation and a despising of Him (rebellion)? What posture shows that Moses and Aaron did not have the spirit of rebellion? Who is specifically cited as having "another spirit"? In what verse do we understand that the people were actually gathered together against God? Are there times when it is easy to follow a passionate multitude to go against God in the name of "preserving" something good? Cite some examples from history or from modern times. ( After all, the ten spies were all about preserving the people from danger and defeat.)

5. What did they presume to do in Numbers 14:44, just as soon as they got to make another big decision? What very clear command was violated? What good thing did they profess to be doing when this presumption occurred?
6. Do you think sometimes we need a ribbon around the borders of our clothes, like the one God told them to attach after these multiple, consecutive presumptuous sins involving the spies, the ark, and the sticks? Find a verse that we should put on our bands, if we had them, to remind us of the commands of the Lord.
7. Notice the very next chapter is the account of the great rebellion of Korah. Read Numbers 16 and 17 and highlight the rebellion. Who else was on the Korah team and what was the consequence of their presumption? Is presumption today sometimes attributable to leaders within the camp who are prideful and unwilling to bow to God's ultimate authority? Good group discussion here.
8. Read Psalm 19. Copy the prayer of Psalm 19: 13,14 for your refrigerator verse this month. If we do not have presumptuous sin in our lives, what will we be?
9. Read about the presumptuous sin of Exodus 32-33. This sin is described by Stephen in Acts 7: 37-41. What phrases in Acts underscore that this sin was rebellion against God?
10. Examine Psalm 106:19-20. Compare this to 2 Peter 2:12. What picture do we see in both verses?
11. What were the consequences of the rebellion involving the golden calf?

12. Compare Deuteronomy 9: 11-29 to the characterizations in Acts 7: 40-51. What word is used to describe those who rebelled in both instances? Find where it was also used to describe those who ultimately stoned Stephen.
13. Read the song of Moses prior to his death from Deuteronomy 32. Notice verses 16-21 relative to their idolatries and write down how God reacted to blatant disrespect and how Moses described his own heart when they provoked him.
14. Notice two similar provocations in Numbers 25. List them here. How could we characterize this chapter as an account of double rebellion?
15. Read I Samuel 13 and I Samuel 15, noting two bold trespasses of Saul, involving sacrifice. Can presumptuous sin be committed in worship to God? Highlight every use of the word “rejected” or “rebellion” in chapter 15. Look up the Hebrew meaning of the word “reject” in your lexicon and write that definition, which surely, in this case, reflects a purposeful disobedience. To what sin did Samuel liken the sin of rebellion?
15. Now let’s look at two examples where the evidence of sin was hidden. Read Joshua 7 and 8. Notice that, according to verse 21 of Joshua 7, Achan saw, coveted, took, and hid. He had to go through a process to achieve his purpose. How does the process evidence that the sin is purposeful? Which of the characteristics listed in 2 Peter 2: 10-14 are applicable to Achan?
16. Now read 2 Samuel 11 and 12. Make a list of the verbs that denote actions of David, himself, in 2 Samuel 11, showing the process of purposeful sin whenever hiding the sin is the plan of action: Here’s a start from the KJV: sent, tarried, arose, walked, saw, sent, inquired...
17. Read Psalm 32 and make a note of the difference in man’s heart (his happiness quota) when he hides sin versus when he confesses the sin. Where was David’s favorite hiding place? Why is that a good hiding place? What cannot be hidden there?
18. Read I Samuel 2 and list the brazen and bold sins of the priests Hophni and Phinehas? How does verse 29 characterize the blatant nature of their sins?
19. In this month’s study of rebellion, we have noticed the following characters:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A man who picked up sticks on the sabbath.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A nation which rejected God’s command to go and conquer Canaan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A nation who went up with the ark against God’s expressed will.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Three men who challenged the delegated authority of Moses and Aaron.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A congregation which was angry because of God’s punishment on Korah and company.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Aaron and the children of Israel who built a golden calf while Moses was in the mount of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A nation joined to an idol, Baal-peor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A man who paraded an unlawful wife through the midst of the assembly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A king who presumed to do the office of the priest and offer the sacrifice, himself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A king who disobeyed God’s specific command regarding the spoils of war.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A man who coveted, stole and hid the sin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A king who lusted, coveted, committed adultery, deceived and murdered and hid all of this.

Write a D beside the instances above in which an explicit command was purposefully disobeyed.  
 Write an A beside the instances when God’s delegated authority was dishonored.

Write a W beside the instances which involved worship.

Write an I beside the instances which involved or led to sexual immorality.

Write a C beside the instances in which covetousness was involved.

Write an L beside the instances in which lying or deceit was involved.

Write an H beside the instances in which sin was hidden or an attempt was made to hide it.

Now, revisit 2 Peter 2 and find every one of the above characteristics or earmarks of presumptuous sin in that chapter. When we, as his people turn away, reject, and rebel, what proverb describes us according to this chapter?

Practically Speaking: Let's pray daily this month that God will help us to be pure from presumptuous sin.

Memorize Psalm 19:13 and include it in this prayer.

## MONTH 5

### *But Isn't my Heart the Most Important Thing?*

As I write this study, I am taking time out, every few minutes, to try to work with a young friend who has lost her way. She has gotten into some trouble because of her sin. She is facing some consequences that she didn't really think through at the time of the commission of her sin. We all do this at times. Statements like these keep coming in texts from her:

"But I never stopped loving God and this just doesn't feel fair."

"But I feel so broken and alone."

"But does God really want me to be so miserable?"

"I can't do this. I just don't feel this is what God wants for my life."

"I know the worship may not be exactly scriptural at this place, but, back in my old congregation, I just began to feel isolated and alone."

We live in a world that's all about feeling. Back in the days of early television, there were the cops and then there were the robbers. There were the Snow Whites/Cinderellas and then there were the wicked queens/stepmothers. There were the brave sailors and then there were the greedy pirates. Now the lines are a little more blurry. The good guys are not really always so good and the bad guys are often just victims of a bad society. Additionally, there are lots of shades of grey in between the blackness of sin and the purity of righteousness. It's really not even so much about the goodness or evil of the actions, themselves. It's more about the heart of the perpetrator of evil. What was he feeling and how much of that feeling can be blamed on how many other people?

The big cultural shift to emotionalism is all around us. Philosophers call it ethical subjectivism. That's the belief that we base our decisions on what we feel is right, rather than having a standard that instructs those decisions. This philosophy emanates from many places today, but it has gained a mighty momentum in Hollywood. Oprah's advice to young girls recently on Good Morning America is an apt sampling of this new dose of the same old "better-felt-than-told" subjective philosophy.

"Every one of us has an internal guidance, a GPS....If you follow that you will be led to the highest good for you, always. That's why all the voices of the world mean nothing if your voice is in alignment with all the voices of the world."

I am not sure what that even means. There's a glitch in the wording that makes it nonsensical. But, in any case, the inner voice is what is felt, not what is instructed.

Marilyn Monroe said "A woman knows by feelings, by intuition, what is best for herself.

Then there's this one that might be on your refrigerator already. It's simply attributed to "the Universe":  
"Choose feelings over logic, adventure over perfection, here over there, now over then, and always LOVE, LOVE, LOVE."

Now this all sounds sweet, but it is so very opposed to the teachings of the Creator of said universe that we as Christian women must activate our debunking radars each morning before we leave the house or turn on the computer. The world is full of sweet sounding meaningless bunkum and balderdash that is in direct conflict with the instructions of the One who has already navigated our path safely through this life to the other side.

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death," Proverbs 16:25.



Let's examine, this month, the impact that the homage to "feelings" is having on the church and on our individual responses to the authority of the Word of God, particularly as it relates to our worship of Him.

1. Examine this quote: "Today we need a reformation of less teaching and more living." This statement, or a rewording of it, is a common mantra of those who would like to throw off the authority of the Bible to command our worship. The absurdity of such a statement may go right past us. Imagine my saying "Today we need less teaching in the first grade and more reading," or "Let's have less instruction in driver's education and more driving."

Of course, such is preposterous. Better reading comes with better teaching. Better, safer driving comes with instruction and practice. And better living comes through the teachings of the Word.

Read through the book of Titus, a clearly instructive book of the New Testament. Make the following lists of commands or commanded characteristics (I've begun your list in each case):

Instructions to Titus  
*set in order the things that are lacking in Crete*  
*ordain elders in every city*

Instructions to potential elders  
*be blameless*

Instructions to aged men  
*be sober*

Instructions to aged women  
*to be in behavior as becomes holiness or be reverent in demeanor*

Instructions to younger women (to come through older women)  
*be sober*

Instructions to young men  
*be sober*

Instructions to servants  
*be obedient to masters*

Instructions to Christians in general  
*deny ungodliness*

This is most definitely a practical book about better living. Now go back and mark the items on your lists that people might unanimously do because of emotions. Which ones might be universally applied in the Crete congregation, by all within the group or category, if Christians were following their best emotions, without the instruction of the Word? On the other hand, go back and mark the ones that, upon study and application, might evoke or grow positive attitudes toward one another and toward the Lord. Which follows which? Does better living follow teaching? Or can we help each other to heaven best when we follow our best intuitions of rightness?

2. Read John 12:48 as you consider the above question. The Greek word for *reject*, according to Strong's, is *atheteo*, a compound word meaning to set aside, i.e. (by implication) to disesteem, neutralize or violate:-- cast off, despise, disannul, frustrate, bring to nought, reject.

Thus, the essence of this passage must be that we will be condemned for disesteeming or neutralizing the teachings of Jesus. Doctrine or teachings are the basis of our judgment in the last day. Read Romans 16 and look for the reason given for marking false teachers. What is it that they use to deceive hearts of innocent people? Use your lexicon to find the meaning of "hearts" in this passage.

3. Lastly in this month's study, explore the meaning of the word mystery so often used in the epistles. It's important to understand the meaning of this word and what it conveys in its various contexts because much of the religious world believes this concept of mystery is what makes Christianity a fluid religion, changing from your heart to mine, meaning different things to different people and being, in general, a better-felt-than-told phenomena. "Truth is just so cryptic and mysterious that it is whatever you make it in your own heart." Is it? What is the mystery about it and what significance does the revealing of the mystery have in our lives? Let's explore this word.

The Greek word for mystery is *musterion* and the essence of its meaning is "something on which silence must be kept."<sup>2</sup> Read the books of Ephesians and Colossians with this definition in mind and mark each occurrence of the word. Notice how often the word is accompanied by the word "hid" or the word "manifest" or the words "made known." What does this tell you about the "mystery" of the gospel? Is the mystery a set of concepts that are hard to be grasped (mystical) and thus better felt and experienced OR...is it information that has been hidden while awaiting revelation?

4. Read this article and think about how we might go light on teaching and heavy on the heart-felt and end up training our children for the emerging church movement. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1473-emerging-church-movement-the-new-face-of-heresy-the>. Make any notes here:
5. Read Acts 17 and locate the passage which mentions "feeling after God". Look up the Greek definition of the word translated "feel". Does this phrase mean "groping after a higher power"? If not, what does it mean?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 2 and answer the following short-answer questions:
  - a. What is an alternate translation of the word testimony (KJV) in verse 1?
  - b. Who was making a mystery plain in this passage?
  - c. What should our faith not be anchored in?
  - d. What was in the mystery, according to verse 8, and how was the mystery being revealed?
  - e. What are the ways that we cannot know the mystery, according to verse 9?
  - f. Where is the message of verse 9 contained in the Old Testament?
  - g. How did God reveal the mystery to Paul?
  - h. What things does the Spirit know, according to verse 10?

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<sup>2</sup> Miller, Dave; *Piloting the Strait*, Sain Publications, Pulaski, TN, 1996.

- i. If we want to know the mind of God, on Whom do we have to depend, according to verse 11?
- j. What language vehicle is used to tell us these secret things that were previously just in the mind of God, according to verse 13?
- k. Which men are not going to “make sense” of the revelation of God through the Spirit?
- l. In the way described here, whose mind are we privileged to know?
- m. In looking at this chapter, do we conclude the mystery is inside of us (led by our hearts) or is it a revelation of another Mind (a Supreme mind)?

Practically Speaking: Pick either the “general Christians” category, the “older women” category, or the “younger women” category from Titus 2 and place your list from above on your refrigerator or someplace where you will see it every day. If you are an older woman, send a card to a younger woman this month encouraging her to be stronger and better in one of the categories listed. If you are a younger woman, enlist the advice of an older woman about one of the listed traits. If you don’t know which you are, you’re probably older. (But you might still be younger than somebody.)

## MONTH 6

### *Restoration?... What is that?*

Restoration. Is it possible? Is it important?... Necessary, even? That's where the dig leads us this month. Is it possible to find a pattern for the church in the New Testament and restore that church—be that church, today?

My husband spoke of restoration while he was restoring an old '53 Chevy pick-up truck. The parallel has stuck with me and reminded me through the years of the meaning of restoration.

There were lots of choices along the path of restoration for the truck. One was paint color. The boy across the street was also fixing up an old truck and Glenn and he liked to talk about it together. But this boy wanted to paint his truck red. Candy Apple red. Glenn got out a copy of the paint codes offered originally with those old Chevrolets and showed him the four or five original paint colors in which you could buy the truck in 1953. "Why would you want to use another color besides one of these original ones?" Glenn had no interest in purchasing paint that would make the truck look less authentic.

Another choice was tires. Can you believe this kid was going to save up for chrome mag wheels for this amazing old machine? My husband, of course, was meticulously shopping (in the days before ebay) for the original rims and correct tires to go on them.

I can recall the same scenario with the upholstery, the radio, the flooring and even the engine. Glenn was saving and finding just the right parts to make his truck be as close to the same truck that his father might have driven off the lot back in that exact year of manufacture. The kid across the street had, in the end, a roaring engine with an even louder booming stereo system. The kid had the high school girls hanging out the windows in that jacked-up Candy Apple red machine. Across the street (with only me sitting in the passenger seat) sat the one that looked and drove just like the original.

The kid was re-forming his old truck. He was not restoring it to its original condition. Glenn was in the restoration business.

Since Jesus only purchased one church (Matthew 16:15,16), I am uninterested in being a part of a new and improved church. I want to be part of that church about which Jesus was speaking when he said "Upon this rock I will build my church...." I do not want to be a part of any reformation of that church. I want to be a member of that restored church. I want to be in that exact church. Restoration; not reformation, for me.

Let's think about restoration.

1. Read 2 Chronicles 29-32. Highlight the verses that give us specific areas of restoration. (Ex: the repairing of the doors or the removal of filth)
2. Who had boarded up the doors in the previous chapter? With what had this man replaced temple worship? Read the entirety of chapter 28 to appreciate the difficulty of what Hezekiah is attempting to do to restore the house of God in a wicked culture.
3. So what about the temple (the church), in more recent history? Was there a time in history when one would have been hard pressed to have found a body of believers who patterned worship and doctrine after the original church? Read the following article by Wayne Jackson before answering the question:  
<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1542-indestructible-church-of-christ-the>. Make any notes here:

4. While the above article gives ample evidence that the church never ceased to exist, there was a great apostasy which began occurring by the second century and grew into full-blown Catholicism which ruled the world of “christendom” until the sixteenth century. Read Acts 20 and highlight the verses that foretell of this departure. Then read 2 Thessalonians 2 and 1 Timothy 4 and highlight the passages that could be identifying this “falling away” as the apostasy to Catholicism.
5. Out of this great and long period of spiritual darkness was born the period of reformation in the 16th century. This, in simplified terms, was a movement to restructure the Catholic church, correcting some of the gross departures from the New Testament pattern. What resulted from this reforming, though, was a new calamity, in itself: the wide array of denominations (various “Christian” churches with differing and opposing teachings about worship and salvation.) The saddest thing about the reformation was that it was NOT a restoration of the New Testament church. In simple terms, again, the reformation tried to fix a very broken religious system and, in the process, only achieved the splintering of various branches off of that big tree; denominations that are still all different in varying ways and to varying extents from the original church born in Acts 2. Let’s take the time to read about just one example of a reformer and the sad end of His work in this article by Wayne Jackson: <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/201-philosophy-of-john-calvin-the>. Make any notes here:
6. Sometimes, I hear brethren thanking God for the work of specific reformers like Luther or Calvin. Why would this be an inappropriate thing for us to do? What was the error of focus in this article? How is this attitude about this error a failure to appreciate restoration of New Testament Christianity?
7. Thankfully, by the early 1800’s in America (earlier dates in some other countries), voices for restoration began to be heard. It’s that concept of restoration (getting the paint color and wheels and radio that really were in the original) that we will consider next as we look back to Hezekiah. Is there a door that had been effectively barred by Catholicism that needed to be repaired and reopened (in a figurative sense)? Let’s consider that door to be the re- introduction of the pure Word of God to people who want to be a part of the simple New Testament church. The Word is the way we access the church. It’s the way we come to see and know what restoration looks like. When people read the Word, the process of being the New Testament church can begin. Find 5 New Testament passages that tell us that the Word brings us to salvation or that it is the way to heaven or some similar phrasing of that truth.
8. Re-read verse 5 of II Chronicles 29 and notice the next procedure of Hezekiah’s restoration. Here, he was addressing those who would consecrate themselves as priests. Who are the priests today in the church or temple? How are we to become sanctified people? Do we have to put away filth, repenting of that dirtiness of sin and decide to be priests, set apart for His purposes? Find at least two lists of things in your New Testament that we have to put away in repentance. Are we also to keep the church sanctified and clean? Read I Corinthians 5 and comment on this process of sanctification. Remember, our quest is full restoration.
9. How long did it take the priests to clean out the filth from the temple, according to this chapter?
10. Now Read Leviticus 4, 8, and 14. Highlight the passages that describe what was done next in 2 Chronicles 29: 20-31. The sin offering consecrated the priests, the altar and all of Israel. The atonement was made with blood. Where is it that we reach the lamb’s blood today for our atonement from sin? Read Romans 6 and find the answer. Now read Hebrews 9 one more time and highlight the verses that speak of the permanent atonement of Christ. Find 10 passages in your New Testament that make it clear at what exact point the washing, or the saving, or the remission, or the forgiveness or the access to the blood occurs. List those here:
11. After the atonement with blood, what did the people do in verses 29 and 30 of chapter 29? What were they restoring in chapter 30?

12. As they restored the prescribed avenues of worship, what did that restoration mean they had to do about all of the false worship they had known? Find the verse in chapter 31 that indicates this.
13. Was this a sacrificial restoration? How do we know this from chapter 31?

Practically Speaking: It's practical to know a little about Alexander Campbell since, if you are a restorationist, you might be called a "Campbellite" at some point in your life. It's important to appreciate the work he did to restore the church of the New Testament, but it's more important to be sure you know you are not following any man, but the Savior, Christ. In other words, it is important to know why you are just a Christian, and not a Campbellite. Do a little research on Alexander Campbell and see if you can answer the following trivia questions:

In what country was he born?

What was his father's name?

To which country did he first migrate?

At which university was he educated?

How many wives did he have and what were their names?

What was the one political venture of his lifetime?

What incident spurred his interest in the study of baptism?

What college did he found?

What is the name of his New Testament translation?

Name one hymn that he authored.

## MONTH 7

### *But where do we get authority for our practices?*

It is very important that we have authority for everything we do in our religious practices. In fact the scripture says that whatever we do in word or in deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord, or by his authority (Col. 3:17). What exactly does that mean...for something to be authorized?

We can understand it easily in other areas of life. Why must I pull over and lower my window when I see blue lights flashing in my rearview mirror? Because there is an authority figure in the car behind me. If I were to get out of my car and run, he might shout "Stop in the name of the law!" I know what "in the name of" means here. It means "by the authority of." The law is the authority when it comes to the rules of driving (and all other areas of civil life).

In my job, my authority is my boss and her authority is her boss, etc...until we get all the way to the top of the company. We call that the chain of authority. We know that chain makes it clear who follows the instructions of whom. If I, as an employee, move ahead and make a big purchase or plan a big project or share information with a competitor without permission, I might be told "But you did not have the authorization to do that." I'd be in trouble.

God has a system of authority, too. The law is the New Testament. It is the rulebook for the church. That's its purpose. In all religious practices, as well as in my personal life, I must look to the Word for authority.

1. In the Old Testament, we see authorized actions being completed with this comment: "according to the word of the Lord" or "according to the law," or "according to the pattern." We can see that "according to" indicates compliance to a standard. It means submission to authority.<sup>3</sup> See how many times you can find those words in the Old Testament. Make sure you check to be sure they are in a context of authority, a standard, or a pattern. Make a list. This might take a while, so when you get twenty instances, you may stop.
2. Read Esther 4. Now, specifically notice verses 16-17. Verse 16 has those words "according to." They are clearly referring to the lack of authority that Esther had received to go in to see the king. Find the passage that explains the "commandment" to which the "according to" was referring.
3. Read Exodus 1-12. Highlight 4:17. Then mark each verse thereafter, in this reading that mentions that rod, which, from this point, becomes a symbol of the authority or power of God.
4. Notice next the command in chapter 7, verse 19. Notice that the specificity of the command precluded many things. They could have used Moses' shepherd's staff if Aaron had accidentally left his rod at home. They could have just used one of their hands. Moses could have smitten the water rather than Aaron. They could have gently reached down and stirred the water with the rod, rather than smiting it. God didn't say not to use Moses' staff. God didn't tell Moses not to smite the water rather than Aaron. God didn't say not to use their hands to hit the water.

Let's do another one. Look at 8:16. Read the command. Wouldn't it have been okay for Aaron to use a tree branch to hit the dust?...Or he could have thrown one of those bricks that they loathed down in the dirt. Maybe he could have just spoken the command for the lice to appear. (That would have been dramatic.) Or he could have hit a tree instead of the dust...or he could have hit a rock. But it is just all too obvious that the specific command excluded other ways to do it.

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<sup>3</sup> Music, Goebel, *Behold the Pattern*; Goebel Music Publications, Colleyville, TX, 1991; pp. 47-48

Now you do it: Create your own scenarios like the two above with 9: 8-10 and then with 12:21-23.

5. Of course with all of the above, we are learning that when God tells us how to do a thing, he is excluding all other ways to do the thing. All other ways to carry out the command are not obedience at all and will not be rewarded. Find a passage now in the book of Numbers in which authority was challenged and the rod became a token against rebellion. What did this amazing authority-proving rod “do”? In this same chapter, what were those who challenged authority called by the inspired writer? Explain why you believe the rod was then placed in the ark of the covenant?
6. Now read Exodus 20. How many of the 10 commandments are “Thou shalt” commands and how many are “Thou shalt not” commands?
7. Let’s look at one of the “Thou shalt” commands (commands which technically begin with “Remember” and “Honour”). Would it have been okay to choose to hallow the third day, instead of the seventh day of the week? “After all, the third day is just like the seventh day in so many ways. It has the same number of hours. One could do that and still work the other six days, just like the passage says. Besides, my birthday is on the sabbath day next week and I wanted to take a birthday trip with my friends. I know God knows my heart and he will be just as pleased with the third day as he is with the seventh day. And besides, this way, I will get to be a good influence on my friends who are going on the trip with me. We will talk about all nine of the other commands as we travel.”

Now, you do the same type of argumentation with verses 24-26.

8. Read Numbers 20 for the perfect (and saddest) illustration of this principle. If ever a dismissal of the specifics of a command could have been excused, this was the time. What happened here and how do we know, from this passage, that God is very serious about our submission to His authority? How was the rod of authority misused in this case? Did Moses use the rod in an unauthorized way? How so? How did Moses fail to sanctify God in this instance?
9. Peruse chapters 21-31 of Exodus. (Peruse and read are not the same) Just take a moment and imagine how many times the scenarios we devised could be done with all the commands of these pages! It simply cannot be argued that whenever God doesn’t tell us not to do something, then that “something” must be accepted and approved by Him. Specificity eliminates other options. When you order something on ebay, do you have to list all the things on ebay that you don’t want to buy? When you fill a prescription written by your doctor, does the pharmacist need a list of drugs your doctor doesn’t want you to take? We can see the absurdity of this kind of thinking. Can you think of a large worship issue for churches today in which a specific command is given, but many have decided to add something unauthorized? List the commands as stated in the New Testament that give authority for the particular part of worship you have chosen.
10. Many theologians today call this necessary exclusion of what’s not on the list, “the authority of silence.” Why, do you suppose, would they call it that?

So far, we have learned that God authorizes by direct command. Sometimes those commands are positive commands and sometimes they are negative. The negative commands are easier for us to keep, generally speaking, because they are prohibitive of something...It’s just one thing (at the time, anyway) that I must refrain from doing. The positive ones are a little more complex. When God says “Thou shalt”, I must obey according to his specifications. ALL of the specs. When He specifies materials, times, tools, people, routes or any number of details, I must remember that He is precluding any substitutes, unnecessary additions or alternate routes in the keeping of the command.



Practically Speaking: Pray for understanding as we continue next month thinking about how we know when something is authorized or approved by God. Then take a few minutes one Sunday afternoon to find a passage that authorizes each thing you did in worship that morning.

## MONTH 8

### *What about the Stuff that's Not in There?*

Sometimes, when God tells us to do something, there are a lot of unanswered questions. He is not always as specific as He was in those chapters in Exodus in which He was prescribing fabrics and exact colors of woven thread and measurements and rings and sockets. We would have been painstakingly careful, but our work would have turned out exactly like the pattern in God's mind. Sometimes the details of carrying out commands are left to the imagination. In other cases, the detail that we are needing might not be specifically stated, but it's still there, if we just think about it. Let's dig into these more subtle, but important aspects of the authority of God. Even when I type the words that express that I am looking for His prescriptions about eternal matters, I know that I am walking on holy ground. Let's study reverently and with open hearts.

1. Every year, we have to read about Noah somewhere, so let's put him right here. Read Genesis 6-8 and highlight the "according to"s that we find in the passage. Now let's think about what it meant that Noah did "according to all that God commanded."
2. Let's specifically look at 6:13-21.
  - a. God told Noah to make an ark of gopher wood. How many other types of wood could be included in the ark's construction?
  - b. What types of tools, hired help, volunteer help, storage containers, etc...do you think would have been needed to do this gopher wood work of building the ark. Make a short list.
  - c. These things on your list are not mentioned in the commands, but we can be sure Noah used some or all of them, because it would have been absolutely necessary in order to obey the command. They (the "detail" works/tools) were authorized by the big command to build an ark of gopher wood. Did the use of these unmentioned things in any way replace obedience to the original command or did they facilitate it? What if Noah had used the gopher wood to build a strong tower on the highest mountain and pitched it with pitch and put the right number of windows and a door and..., rather than a floating vessel? Would that have been authorized? What if he had used the gopher wood to build the ark, but decided to alter its dimensions? Would the finished project be authorized? How do you think an alteration in specified dimensions would have affected the outcome of the flood for Noah's family?
  - d. Next, Noah was told to cover the ark within and without with pitch. Make a list of unmentioned things Noah would have needed to accomplish this:
  - e. Again, these items are not mentioned. Were these items authorized? Why or why not?
3. Read Exodus 25-31 and Numbers 1, highlighting everything that has to do with the ark of the covenant. Especially, make a note of where it was to stay and who was to touch it.
4. Now read I Samuel 2-6 and highlight each occurrence of an unauthorized action on the part of priests. Summarize, in your own words, how it was that the holy ark ended up in the hands of the Philistines for a time. And, of all things, how did milk cows end up deciding where the ark would be?!
5. Which of the following were carried out in completely authorized ways in I Samuel 6:

*location of the ark:*  
*mode of transport for ark:*  
*identity of ark managers:*  
*proper meetings occurring at ark:*

6. By the time of 2 Samuel 6, much rebellion had occurred about the ark; its location, its purpose and its caretakers. What other unauthorized action was happening in this chapter prior to Uzzah's touching the ark? How can God's people witness so many slow departures from the authorized that we might find ourselves "helping" with the unauthorized? How did Uzzah do just that? Make a note of how someone might unwittingly help with the unauthorized in religion today. What was God's view of aiding in the unauthorized? (I have friends who are very proud of their "contributions" to unauthorized works in false religions. Do you? Can we help them to know principles of authority?)
7. Read Leviticus 10. Make a list of things Nadab and Abihu did correctly. Notice the one thing that was unauthorized. Did the one unauthorized element defile the entire worship? How does that speak to our worship today? Find a verse in the chapter that notes what distinction we miss when we substitute the unauthorized.
8. Now, let's take this concept of authority through necessary implication to the New Testament and do the same thing.
  - a. Read 1 Corinthians 11. To study the reference Paul made in the passage, read also Matthew 26:26-29.
  - b. Some specifics are given. The food items to be included are specified. That makes the choice, for us, simple. Two items are clearly listed in the instructions/example. List the items that this automatically precludes. (Not really. You could never make a list that long.) Suffice it to say that putting hamburger or soft drinks in place of the specified items listed would be an unauthorized substitution. Specified = non-negotiable. However, this command, like most, leaves some specifics of the "how" to our judgment. Ingredients for the bread are not listed, except for the specification that there was no leaven in the bread. Whether or not the bread is purchased ready-made is not mentioned. Exactly what kind of fruit is non-specified, although it seems very certain that their fruit was grape juice and it seems very likely that it was red grape juice rather than white due to the representation it was constituting (blood). But it HAD to be juice from a vine fruit. That's specified. What are some fruits this would preclude? How does that necessarily affect my choice if I am in the grocery aisle purchasing the juice for communion?
  - c. Make four lists: First, make a list of non-negotiables about the Lord's Supper (things we have to do because it's clearly stated). Don't leave out the matters of the heart. Next, make a list of things we must do because it's necessarily implied in the passages (things we would need to have/do in order to carry out the specified command). Thirdly, list some more things related to the Lord's Supper that are non-specified in these readings, thus things about which we are free to choose. Remember anything in the "choice" category must be for the purpose of fulfilling the specific command(s) under consideration. Fourthly, list some things we could do that would be unauthorized, thus sinful, in practicing this holy feast. You can use any passages in the New Testament about the Lord's Supper to complete your lists. Be creative. Be sober-minded.

*Non-negotiables:*  
*Necessarily Implied:*  
*Free to Choose:*  
*Unauthorized:*

9. Find all the few references to music in worship in the New Testament. (You could do this by using your concordance. Key words are hymn, singing, and psalms.) Make a list of things commanded (non-negotiables) with regard to worship music in the New Testament church. Then make a list of things required to do those exact commands. Then make a list of optional things we might use (or not use) in carrying out the commands. Then make a list of possible things we might employ or do that would be in violation of or a substitution for the exact commands. Good group or podcast discussion. (Look for examples here, too, of any approved worship music in the New Testament church.)

*Non-negotiables:*

*Necessarily Implied:*

*Free to Choose:*

*Unauthorized:*

10. I can, from study and from just thinking about authority, think of one more way we can know that an activity is pleasing to God; that is, if we find it being done in the New Testament church and we are assured of God's approval of said activity. Can you think of examples of such? (Begin in Acts 2 and see if you can find something the infant church did that we know is acceptable to do, not because it is a stated command, but because they did it and it was sanctioned in the passage.)

When we look over the last two months of study, we can park here:

- a. There are four tests we can lay down to check any action to see if we have authority for participating: They are:
    - Is there a command to do it that's for all people? (If so, I must do it!)
    - Is it necessary for me to do it in order to keep a commandment? (If so I must do it.)
    - Is it an activity/tool used to accomplish the exact command God has given? (If so, I have permission/authority to do it/use it in the accomplishment of that command.)
    - Did someone do it in the New Testament with the favor or approval of God in the keeping of a command? (If so, I have permission/authority to do it, if it is still available to me.)
  - b. If I can run my spiritual or religious action through those four tests, I will be able to be sure I am acting under the authority of, or in the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
11. Take the practice of baptism for the remission of sins and run it through the four questions. How many of the four tests does baptism pass? Use your concordance if needed.
12. Now take the practice of sprinkling babies for absolution of the sinful nature in hopes that they are among the elect. How many of the tests does this practice pass?
13. Is there an "according to" presence in the New Testament. Use your concordance. How do your findings show that God has a pattern today that is basic to pleasing Him?

Practically Speaking: Think about the Lord's Supper once more. What command do we have about our thoughts during the Lord's Supper? Pray about this discernment and think about what tools you might utilize to be thinking right during this communion with Him. Make one or more of those tools, thus authorized, available in your hand or in your heart while partaking this month.

## MONTH 9

*But about elders... Do they really have the right to tell us what to do, or do they just lead us by example?*

The short answer is yes. They do have the right to tell us what to do in matters of judgment. In fact, that's what they are there for!

And no. They do not merely lead by example. They should most certainly be doing that. All of us should be doing that. But Biblically, there is authority in the eldership. There is no authority in any one elder. But the eldership is both authoritative over and responsible for our souls. Let's examine this authority this month.

Because I am hoping for some freshness and diversity in our approach, I'm going to introduce our study this month and then give you some reading choices that I think will be valuable for your perspective about God's ideal elderships today. More importantly, I hope it will help us all to be the kind of sheep, in their folds and under their authority, that God would have us to be.

1. Read the entire book of I Timothy, highlighting the qualifications given Timothy for the ordination of elders.
2. Read Titus 1 again, highlighting the qualifications, once again, of elders in that passage.
3. Read Acts 20:28-32; Acts 14:23; I Peter 5:1-4; I Timothy 5:17-20; Hebrews 13:7-20 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12.
4. Using your lexicon, define the Greek words for *shepherd* and for *overseer* in Acts 20:28. In the context, what is one important kind of protection to be afforded by the shepherds? List some means shepherds might employ to provide this protection.
5. Looking at Acts 14:23, make a list of some prayer pleadings we need to be offering for our elders.
6. According to your lexicon, what does the verb shepherd mean in I Peter 5:2? If shepherds are only to shepherd those who are among them, then how does that speak to the need for Christians to make known their desire to be a part of a certain congregation rather than members of the church, at large?
7. Give Greek definitions for the words translated *obey* and *submissive* from Hebrews 13:17 and for the words *rule* and *follow* in verse 7.
8. According to 1 Thessalonians 5: 12, what are three responsibilities that elders have? Why should we esteem them?
9. Let's notice here that there are only two areas of oversight (decision-making) that are possibilities for elders to maintain. One is oversight in matters of doctrine. Prove scripturally that all matters of doctrine have already been settled, thus, no doctrinal decisions are up for "deciding" today. Start with 2 John 1:10. Then use a concordance and look up all the examples of the word doctrine in the epistles. Let's use the KJV this time for uniformity. Note the passages which show us that doctrine is settled. It is unchangeable truth. The only other possibility for the leadership of elders is that their decisions are about matters of judgment. They feed us and hold us accountable to the settled doctrine of the faith as patterned in the New Testament.
10. For the remaining portion of our study on the authority of elders, choose one of the following two options for reading. Both of these options are a potpourri of scenarios that elders face and they are a good snapshot of the blessing we have, in their authority, in our congregations. When you're finished, compose a

paragraph or two about what you learned, liked, or didn't like about the reading and email that paragraph to [byhcontest@gmail.com](mailto:byhcontest@gmail.com). We will choose three of those paragraphs and award a prize package from [www.thecolleyhouse.org](http://www.thecolleyhouse.org). to those three diggers in the current 2019 study. (Winners will choose three books, CDs or DVDs of choice. It will be a great time of year for graduation gifts!)

Here are the two options:

- a. Read the book "Awake at Night" by Glenn Colley. You may order this book at [www.thecolleyhouse.org](http://www.thecolleyhouse.org) for a discounted Digger price during the months of April and May, 2019.

OR

- b. Read the following articles from the website [www.christiancourier.com](http://www.christiancourier.com). Their excellent searchable site will navigate you easily.

The Awesome Responsibility of Church Leadership, by Wayne Jackson

What about "Local" Church Membership?, by Wayne Jackson

Paul's Discourse to the Elders at Ephesus, by Wayne Jackson

How Should Church Business Be Conducted Without Elders?, by Wayne Jackson

What Is a Pastor?, by Jason Jackson

Is Pledging One's Weekly Contribution Wrong?, by Wayne Jackson

Misdirected Benevolence, by Wayne Jackson

What About Moderate Social Drinking?, by Wayne Jackson

Is Church Attendance Required?, by Wayne Jackson

Should "Weak" Christians Be Disfellowshipped?. by Wayne Jackson

Rehoboam Revisited, by Wayne Jackson

Belly-button Rings and Low Rider Jeans, by Jared Jackson

Fashion Oddities and Public Worship, by Wayne Jackson

The Support of Gospel Preachers, by Wayne Jackson

Is a Church Obligated to Support Mission Work, by Jared Jackson

Questions About Missions, by Jason Jackson

Does 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Constitute a Binding Pattern?, by Wayne Jackson

The Divine Pattern of Acceptable Worship (Part 1), by Wayne Jackson

The Divine Pattern of Acceptable Worship (Part 2), by Wayne Jackson

Do the Psalms Authorize Instrumental Music in Worship?, by Wayne Jackson

Clapping as an Accompaniment to Singing in Worship, by Wayne Jackson

The The Silence of the Scriptures: Permissive or Prohibitive?, by Wayne Jackson

Should Women Function as Translators in the Assembly?, by Wayne Jackson

Practically Speaking: Get one of the young girls in your congregation to help you make a bulletin board in your building to thank the elders for their faithful service.

OR

Give one of your teen boys in the church a copy of the book "Headed to the Office", by Glenn Colley to help him grow into a faithful elder one day. (Be sure to write a note in it to encourage him to do grow toward this goal.)

OR

Write a note to at least one couple in your congregation who are young parents, encouraging them to raise up their boys to be faithful elders one day. Thank them for the work they are putting into the future church leaders.

OR

Invite the young girls over to your house and have a devotional about Priscilla and how she encouraged the early church by working with her faithful husband and helping him to teach Apollos about the authorized baptism.

## MONTH 10

### *What's the big "authority" deal about women, anyway?*

Near the end of the year 2014, I wrote the following letter to a young lady in Franklin, Tennessee whom I'd just seen deliver a sermon in a congregation bearing the name "church of Christ." Until now I have not published the letter, but I do so now, in this study, in hopes that it, and the study that follows will help some who may be "on the fence" about the authority principle as it applies to women leading in worship and in other positions over men in the body. I'm also hoping, for those of us who are not on the fence, that this might serve to help us see that it's important, and that the reason that it is important is not because our parents and grandparents believed it or because it is our "tradition." Neither of those reasons have any validity, whatsoever. None.

What matters is our adherence to the unchanging teachings of the New Testament...as authoritative...as the pattern from God for our worship, our service and our morality in this present time. Here's the letter I sent to this precious young soul:

First, Happy Birthday. Hope it was a great day. Just noticed that it was your birthday when I looked to see if this page was about the same person who's been making the rounds on you tube and various sites within the churches of Christ. I think I found you.

I'm sure I'm way down on the list of people who have contacted you about the videos. I cannot help but believe, at this point, that you sincerely want to serve the Lord and that your heart is bound up in wanting to fulfill his Will for your life. I'm praying that you will use that great talent that you've been given for His glory.

But I want to beg you to consider that His Holy will has been revealed and that there are very clear prohibitions given in I Timothy 2 (I know you are well aware of this passage) about women in worship settings. These teachings are not pitted against any teachings of Christ. (We do not have to choose between Christ and Paul, because they do not contradict one another in any way.) Further, the prohibition is tied, not to culture, but to creation, as is plainly stated in the passage. You have time now, in your young life, to still save yourself from going off this doctrinal cliff that is so oppositional to the Word and will do so much damage in the body. You are obviously a strong woman and publicly recanting and coming back to the path to which God has truly called you in His Word would take every bit of that courage. But you can do it. I would so like to help you. What you are doing is touted by many people on your facebook page and in your circles as brave and inspirational. It would take a lot of courage at this point to stand up and say "I was wrong. I am going to stand with the Holy Spirit and influence women to be the great influences that we can be in the channels that God has given us. I am going to do this in spite of the encouragement from the Bible faculty at my university and the acceptance of the Fourth Avenue church." ...

...I want to ask you to please take the time to at least read the following. It is logical and Biblical. Thank you in advance for taking the time. <http://www.calebcolley.com/theres-movement-coming-response-patrick-mead-lauren-king-preachers/>

I keep thinking of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and how they stepped outside of the realm of authority assigned them by God and the terrible consequences to them and those who followed them. I know that I am a stranger to you and that you may have already firmly charted your course. But there are some who influenced you to preach at Fourth Avenue. Perhaps there might be someone who could yet influence you to change courses one more time. I am praying for that. I love the church. I love the women of the church. We can do so much with His blessings. Please

do not hesitate to contact me if there is any way I can help you at any point in the future. I am, with all the best wishes for your life in His service...(then I gave my email address).

Cindy

I did not receive a response. But perhaps there will be those who yet respond; not to me, of course, but with submissive hearts to Him, even now, five years later, as we revisit this. This month, let's look at the New Testament pattern as it instructs us about women in worship.

1. Whenever our culture becomes indoctrinated, then infatuated with another "ism", it doesn't take long for the church to be affected. Feminism has gone deep into the hearts of the majority of women in the U.S. during the last half-century and it has done significant damage to the body of Jesus in many places. Let's begin by reading the book of 1 John. It's such an easy read and it always reminds me how unimportant, even dangerous it is to buy into the errant mentalities that pervade the society around me. Let's mark every time the book contains the word world. Let's steal back from the close-up of what's around us and focus on what God has authorized for His women in the body. Let's trust Him that he knows what is best for us.
2. Let's read Psalm 100 next and identify ourselves as being owned and as being sheep. Mark those passages. During this study, let's be sure we remember our place in HIS universe. Let's trust Him as the manufacturer with the perfect directions for assembly of our lives!
3. Let's also step back from the current thinking in religious circles that God's Word is so complicated and nuanced that we really cannot know definitive truth. That's the kind of thinking that spawns statements like "We are all at different spots on our journeys to truth, so we will all claim our own individual truth," or "To be confident that we are right about any doctrine, and that another person has misunderstood, is to be arrogant," or (the most insulting of all) "Your spiritual maturity level is not there yet. I used to be just like you and think we could know truth and tie our hopes up in doctrine, but now I have grown from that point." From the following list, let's notice what the Bible claims about the absolute, knowable truth it contains. Write the key words that claim truth can be known beside each verse:

John 8:31-32  
1 John 4:6  
1 John 3:18-19  
2 Peter 2:1-2  
Titus 1:1-3  
2 Timothy 4:1-4  
2 Timothy 3:1-9  
2 Timothy 2:15  
1 Timothy 2:2-4  
Colossians 1:3-6  
Ephesians 6:10-19  
Ephesians 1:3-13  
Galatians 2:5, 14  
2 Corinthians 6:7  
2 Corinthians 4:1-2  
Romans 2:2-8  
John 18:37  
John 17:17



4. Read the book of 2 John and mark the words truth, teaching and doctrine. How do you know that the elect lady could discern truth?
5. Now, with your concordance, count the number of times the word truth is in the book of Psalms in your version. Almost all of these are speaking about the truth of God or His Word.

The Bible makes a strong claim that it is knowable truth and truth that blesses us!

6. Herbert Lockyer's book called "All the Women of the Bible" lists 100 named women in scripture and over 400 entries of women of scripture in all. Throughout all of the pages of this fairly thick volume describing the lives of all of the women of significance in scripture, not one single woman is characterized as a worship leader or with any description synonymous with that designation.<sup>4</sup> Name several times throughout Scripture when you know women were present for worship, yet it was the man who offered the sacrifice or preached in the assembly.
7. Read I Timothy 2, highlighting the part that refers to worship. Let's notice verse 8, first...about praying in worship assemblies. It's interesting to notice the Greek word for *men* in that passage. What is that Greek word and what does it denote? Is it a generic word used in speaking about all of mankind? Note that this is in a context (1-8) of public prayer.
8. The passage that directly bears on this topic of authority for women in worship is verses 11-15. The "authority" or "command" verse, of course, is 12. Albert Barnes says this is what the passage means: Let the woman learn in silence. Listen attentively to instruction, without attempting to teach in public...With due subjection to those who are in authority, and who are appointed to minister in holy things.<sup>5</sup>

This is what the religious world, in general, took the passage to mean until very recent history, because the language is very clear. Since authority is not about what any man says, look at the Greek words and let's define them. The following phrases are taken from the NKJV:

"Let a woman learn in silence with all submission." Use any reputable Greek lexicon and define: *silence and submission*

"And I do not permit a woman to teach." *permit and teach*

"Or to have authority over a man." Define have *authority over*:

"But to be in silence." Define be in *silence*:

9. Next read I Corinthians 14. To whom is this book written? Is it focused on the worship assembly or private behavior? (We should also add that the worship of this church was, unlike our own, influenced by the miraculous gifts that its members had been given by the laying on of apostles' hands.)
10. Verses 34 and 35 are authoritative commands. Let's examine meaning from Greek using any reputable lexicon:  

"Let your women keep silent in the churches." Define keep silent and churches:

<sup>4</sup> Lockyer, Herbert, "All of the Women of the Bible," Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI; 1988

<sup>5</sup> Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament, Thessalonians-Philemon*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1955, p. 136.

“For they are not permitted to speak.” Define to speak:

“But they are to be submissive as the law also says.” Define submissive:

“And if they want to learn something.” Define learn:

“Let them ask their own husbands at home” (these are all the obvious meanings).

“For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” Define shameful, to speak, and church:

11. Did women prophesy in the first century during the time of the miraculous? Read Acts 2, Acts 21 and I Corinthians 11 and highlight the verses about women prophesying:

Define the word prophesy from these passages from your lexicon. Does this definition necessitate that these women were speaking in public worship assemblies?

12. Was there a woman deacon (in the official office sense of I Timothy 3) in Romans 16:1-2? What is the Greek word for *deacon* (KJV) in Romans 1? Find this Greek word in Matthew 23:11 and John 2:5. What does the word mean? What does the same word mean in Philippians 1:1 and I Timothy 3:8,12,13? Can you think of English words that we might use in both an official and an unofficial sense as we communicate? List a few and give the two meanings. (Start with “He plays basketball.” From that statement, do we know if he has fun after school or if he is in the NBA? Which is an official sense of the word play?)
13. What about Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2,3? The Greek for *labored* with is the past tense of a verb that means to strive together. Make a list of ten things women can do with men (husbands or not) to strive together for the sake of the gospel. (I think most of us do this daily.)
14. Could the teaching of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 have been exclusively for the culture in the day of Paul, the apostle. Examine 1 Timothy 2 and see if you can find a clue about the origin of this teaching. Did this “plan” for women in worship originate in the first century? Explain.
15. For podcast or group discussion, let’s be prepared to discuss this popular phrase: “Anything a man can do, a woman can do better,” in light of our Authority banner for this year’s study. Is this phrase true? Is this phrase relevant? Is this phrase Biblical? Make a few notes, including some scriptures, to affirm or deny.
16. Read Numbers 16 and 17 one more time. Write the wording in that passage that might cause one who is thinking about taking authority that is not hers, to reconsider. (This is a sobering text.)

Practically Speaking: What are some things women can/should be doing when we assemble? Make a practical list under the title “Reverent in Behavior” (title taken from Titus 2:3) as you read through the book of James.

(Example: 1:19—Take the time to put your arms around a sister who is hurting and just listen.

OR

From 1:21—keep that Bible open during the sermon and be taking notes.

OR

From 1:23-25, write down a specific change you plan to make each week in your life because you have “looked in the mirror” of the Word.

Keep this list in your Bible... These are a few Ideas to start your list. Now you finish the list of ideas from this great and practical book. You don't have to actually DO all the things you are listing. These are ideas from which to pick.)

## MONTH 11

*“But can't God just take me where I am and use me? ...After all, relationships over rules....Right?”*

“Yes. Come as you are. Come right over here. No changes. No improvements. No loyalty, even, required. Better yet, just let me come to you and let me love you,” said the snake just before he opened his mouth and made short work of consuming that little mouse.

But in all successful human relationships, there are rules. The choice may lie in whether or not to have the relationship in the first place, but where there is a meaningful, trusting relationship, there are rules. The Bible is the rulebook for relationship with God. He is my Creator whether I like or acknowledge it, or not. But He lets me choose whether or not He is my Lord...my Father...my King...my Protector...My Friend. If I choose the eternal benefits of that relationship, however, I live in the covenant. And, by definition, a covenant IS rules.

It should be obvious that, in a relationship between the Holy Creator and myself, He is the One Who makes the rules. The greatest thing of all is that, though He is the One who makes the rules (draws up the covenant) because He is Almighty (supreme in power), He makes the rules that are of ultimate benefit to me (the finite and insignificant one in the relationship), because He is also all merciful (supreme in love). He is the only One to whom I can give myself with complete trust—100 percent risk-free, because He is all loving and unchanging. There's no reason for insecurity or doubt in my relationship with God. He will not let me down. But there are rules and they are not mere suggestions for my behavior in the relationship. They're commands. They are requirements, albeit, when I am trying to keep the covenant, and fall short, He forgives and, upon my repentance, allows me to remain in the covenant,

There was a day in the United States, when, although many people were not choosing His covenant, they still understood His absolute moral authority. There was a whole lot more respect for His moral, behavioral laws than we see in our more rebellious, free-thinking world today. Let's examine some of the obvious areas in which we, as a society, have slapped at the face of God and proclaimed ourselves not only free of, but revolted by the suggestion of His moral authority.

Perhaps the sexual revolution of the 1960s was the result of a national pride before God...an attitude that acknowledged our “own” achievements in fields of science and technology, our recent victories in world wars and our place of dignity as a world power. I know that this oversimplification doesn't explain fully something so complicated as a moral revolution, but, the middle of the 20th century found school children being told, even in schools where God's existence was still not yet being denied, that “You can do anything you want to do and you can do it your way.” We were told that each individual decides what is right and wrong for his/her life. We were told that human achievement was in an evolving state...and that we should question the time-honored values that our grandmothers had taught us. We were told, especially, that successful women of the future would not be interested in being at home with their children. “There are far more interesting things to do with your life and there are far more important contributions you can make to society than those your grandmothers have made by raising children.” I know. I was there. The books they had us read and the projects they had us complete were pulling us along to intellectual “freedom” which spawned a feministic, sexual and moral revolution. It was a revolution in which walls were being battered and collapsing under a revolt that was a rejection of the moral code of the Bible.

The first recognizable wall that was obliterated was the time-honored moral law that sex should be reserved for marriage. This happened quickly. I can remember when my classmates, in a progressive college-preparatory high school in Birmingham, Alabama, went on a senior trip following graduation. It was shocking for me to hear about all of the unfettered sexual activity that had occurred on the beaches of Gulf Shores that spring by kids whose parents were church-going, community leaders in suburbs of Birmingham. These children came to middle and even high school with moral codes that had been eradicated by the time of graduation. It was 1977

when we graduated and they had read and reported on enough Vonnegut and Knowles, Steinbeck and Woolf, to have become “enlightened” with the help of popular television that had begun to make us laugh at sexual humor, (as in *Happy Days*, which seems innocent compared to today’s fare) and believe that people who saved sex for marriage were languishing behind the times in a pitiful minority of the sheltered. High school teachers in this academically advanced school were big proponents of “finding your own way” by challenging the norms of formerly accepted moral codes. And then, it was also during my high school years that we stopped reading the Bible and saying the model prayer in the mornings. Further, some really funny and popular guy had actually grown a little marijuana garden out beside the sidewalk in back of the school building; so they made their own little smoking area at the school, to further dull the moral senses. (I mean besides the big smoking area at the main building where all the kids could go to smoke cigarettes with the full sanction of the administration.) Life had changed while I walked those halls. Let’s examine how God would have weighed in on the sexual revolution, and its attendant revolts in the mid-seventies had His voice been heard at all. (Remember, in 1977, we had never heard of AIDS, but God already knew about it, for sure. In 1977, we had heard rumblings about abortion and some court case in 1973, but most of us had not heard of anyone who had considered it and we certainly had not heard of a clinic that provided abortions all day long. We did not know what “transgender” even meant, but God was ahead of that game, of course.).

1. Read I Corinthians 5-6. What do you think it means that they “gloried” in the sin of fornication in the Corinthian church? Do you think there is often pride in rebellion? How might the term “glory” signify a kick against authority? How might this manifest itself in churches today? Which public venues in our country now “glory” in fornication?
2. Search these chapters for the two-fold purpose of the “deliverance to Satan.” Write this purpose here:
3. What Old Testament observance was referenced to encourage the Corinthians to get rid of the leaven of sin (in this case, fornication) that was occurring (and being celebrated, to an extent) in the church? Read Exodus 12 and look for the verse that pronounced the punishment on the one who ate the leaven during the time of the first passover. (In reading about this, I noted that commentators stressed that Jews used candles to actually search their homes in subsequent Passover feasts to be certain that there was no leaven in their houses.) How might this affect our thinking about the sin we may be ignoring in our own lives?
4. Where is the implied teaching in this passage that the Corinthians were going to have to be different from the world if they believed and practiced what the Bible teaches about fornication? Find five more New Testament verses that imply that we are going to have to be set apart from or different from the world, if we maintain sexual purity. Then list five ways that we might begin teaching our children that truth about sanctification from early ages, even before they are old enough to understand all about human sexuality. This teaching in the home makes a serious statement about our families’ recognition of God’s moral authority.
5. Chapter 6 mentions two aspects of us that are owned by God, thus totally under His authority (as we studied in month one). What are those and what sin is specifically mentioned as being against both? Why do you think this is stated? Let’s discuss this in a group or on the podcast.

The next wall that came down with a mighty crash was the time-honored sanctity-of- marriage-wall. Divorce statistics went through the roof and, quite suddenly, in America, for a time, we saw divorce rates actually spiral to rates higher than those of U.S. marriages.

6. These stats are easily found online. Find a reliable source and record here the divorce rate in the U.S. at the time you are doing the study. If possible, compare this rate with the divorce rate in the mid-twentieth century. Although divorce rates have been steadily dropping in the past few years, most researchers tell us

that divorce rates are trending downward because couples are choosing to just move in together rather than to marry.

7. Record every repetition in scripture of God’s law of “leave and cleave” first recorded at the first marriage in Genesis 2:24. Read Matthew 19 and Mark 10 and record here Jesus’ law about marriage and divorce. Was this teaching shocking to those who heard Jesus speak it? How do you know? What is the one reason that Christ gives for which a man or woman may put away a spouse and marry again? What is the Greek word for that English word and what is its meaning?
8. These statistics<sup>6</sup> from 2016 have been compiled relative to children of divorce:

<b>Children of Divorced Parents Statistics</b>	<b>Data</b>
Average annual number of children whose parents divorce	1,500,000
Percent of children born today who will experience the breakup of their parents	50%
Percent who experience short term effects like anxiety, anger, shock, and disbelief	85%
Percent who experience long term effects like loneliness, unhappiness, anxiety, and insecurity	60%
Percent of long term prison inmates that grew up in broken homes	70%
<b>Percent INCREASE in the following behavior for children of divorced parents</b>	<b>Percent Increase</b>
Need psychological help	90%
Attempt suicide	55%
Be in a marriage that ends in divorce	47%
Have problems with peers	80%
Earn lower grades in school	70%
Drop out of school	50%
Experience injury, asthma, headaches, and speech defects	20%

<sup>6</sup> Children of Divorce Statistics; [www.statisticbrain.com](http://www.statisticbrain.com)

9. While we understand that there are disparities in statistics from various sources, the evidence is overwhelming that millions of children in our country are suffering immeasurably from divorce. Is there a sense in which divorce is often a selfish answer to marital problems between a man and a woman? Explain.
10. How is divorce one of the most complicated sinful paths in our culture, especially when an involved party desires reconciliation with God? Read Matthew 10 and Luke 14 and find a passage in each of these that might indicate the difficulty one encounters when in the sin of an adulterous marriage?
11. List five things parents can do in the home to help insure that their children never divorce? How can we stem the tragic tide of divorce in homes within the church?
12. Go to this link and read this simple outline about tools we can use in protecting our homes from divorce. Make a list of those tools (and accompanying passages) below  
<http://www.pblcoc.org/media/Lectureships/2011/Colley-Glenn-7-Tools-Every-Home-Needs-to-Survive.pdf>:
13. Finally, read Ezra 9, 10. The requirement of repentance in these two chapters is a very large one. Since this was written for another people of God in a pre-Calvary time period, to be sure there are things in the account that do not apply to you and me. Still, it is important to remember that these things were written for our learning and so that we can have hope (Romans 15:4). We should also remember that the heart of God has always been the same. Calvary was already in his heart. Here is a case that cannot occur today, because the same situation of forbidden marriages to various nationalities does not exist in our day. But these were people who had thrown God's covenant out the window when they made marriage vows. They had placed another covenant above the one they had with God and taken on idolatry in the process. What did God require of them as they repented? Our sin today, in a marriage that is not God-approved, is not the same exact one (though idolatry IS putting something else besides God in the prime place of allegiance in our worlds.) But what IS the sin of a marriage that lacks the approval of God according to Matthew 19:9? Would I have to stop that sin in order to repent and restore my covenant relationship with Him?

Disclaimer: I understand that women who are divorced will study this material and I further know that many have no choice in the matter. None of this material is to make innocent spouses in any situation feel guilt or hurt. Many divorced mothers are bringing up children to the very best of their ability and need the support of sisters, encouraging and filling in gaps of time, teaching and nurturing. I encourage us all, as women of faith, to be supporters of one another as we strive to be better for Him. But may we keep saying the teachings of Jesus about divorce, for the next generation that we love so much.

We cannot leave the topic of authority in morality without talking about the addictive epidemic that is pornography in our country. Becoming involved during the teen years is so common as to almost be routine among boys and porn addiction is steadily growing among girls, as well (though the problem will never be as common among girls as it is among boys.) Several factors have made this a problem that almost every home will at least encounter, in some way, in our day. Of course, the biggest factor that has driven this problem to the destructive level that it has reached is the very easy access of pornography via the internet, while almost every teen has almost unlimited access to the internet. My husband regularly counsels with those who have become addicted and offers accountability that has a very high success rate in overcoming the addiction. This week, as I write, it was a sweet and promising 14 year-old whose parents contacted us. Pornography is spiritually deadly. It is a tool that the devil has used with great success and it allows few victims to escape without permanent scars that will damage future marriages. Pornography is a sin and to remain in its grasp is rebellion against the authority of God.

14. For one obvious thing that women can do to help men maintain purity of mind, listen to the following audio and make notes: <http://www.westhuntsville.org/Audio/Uploaded/03222015-Sunday-AM.mp3>
15. Read Matthew 5 and find the plain prohibition of pornography use. Write it here:
16. You don't need statistics to know I'm accurate in telling you that internet relationships are a serious threat to our marriages in the twenty-first century. I can tell you from just observing people whom I thought I knew quite well and from watching these people wreck and ruin innocent lives, that when we begin spending seemingly innocent private time on the computer, the anonymous relationships we form in chat rooms and on web sites can turn into spiritually deadly trysts in the bedroom. I learned that my friend Janice, after twenty years of marriage to a faithful gospel preacher, had left behind her husband and two teenage children to travel across the country and move in with a man she met in a chat room. I learned that my friend Sam, was losing his job as a gospel preacher because his computer pornography addiction had led to physical acts involving women in the church. I learned that my friend Mary Ann had walked in on her husband...again...as he closed the door to his home office and nurtured his perverse pornography habit to the neglect of his three young children and his beautiful and dutiful Christian wife. I learned that my friend Tara recently discovered the "other" life her husband had been living for the past 15 years. Jason, Tara's husband, was a computer programmer. His own personal computer, when finally examined after one slip-up, let his wife know there was an infidelity problem. It revealed a long and deceptively sordid tale of pornography addiction and repeated liaisons with women even as he served their congregation as one of its ministers. Many counseling situations have found me sitting across the table from a wife whose world has just collapsed because of behavior triggered by internet misuse. It used to take a lot of rather bold immoral behavior to engage in conversation and liaisons that might escalate to an affair, but now that behavior is easily concealed and solicited by lonely people in chat rooms and on instant messaging services in your most private world. Pornography formerly required going into a store and purchasing magazines or going to an adult movie store for a rental. At least there was a deterrent there for one who was at all concerned about reputation. But the devil now peddles pornography in private perverted sanctuaries. He has successfully removed the stigma and he loves it when we step on the path to ruin thinking "No one will ever know."

So what can women do?

- Keep computers in open and busy places in your home.
- Purchase internet guards that are reliable in blocking pornographic material from your computer and devices.
- Stay out of chat rooms in which you talk to people of the opposite sex that you don't know.
- Don't get on the computer at night after your husband goes to bed. Go to bed with your husband.
- Do not download (or if already downloaded, delete) apps that give easy access to pornography. These, sadly, include many that are popular among our teens, even in our churches.
- Use your email server's blocking service to automatically delete emails that have sexual content. Most servers have the ability to delete emails that contain certain words. I have blocked all emails with headings containing the words breasts, Viagra, sexy, sex, fantasy (and lots more that I won't include here). This is a simple step to take, but your email content will be much less provocative if you do this at the outset.
- When suggestive emails do get by your guards, hit "delete". Never open questionable emails from people you don't know. If you accidentally delete an email you needed, the sender will find another way to contact you. Take precautions. Sometimes one click can put an image in your mind that you can't easily erase.
- If you already have a problem with pornography, quit cold turkey. Any attempt to wean yourself away from this temptation is merely feeding the addiction. If after quitting, you have a relapse (even one time), then set up an accountability system by which you will report to a responsible person daily. Tell someone outside of your family about the problem. Choose someone you respect.



Then set up a daily communication system with this person, so you know everyday that you are committed to honestly “coming clean” with him/her about your addiction. If you still have relapses, seek professional Christian counseling and therapy.

- Stay away from video games that get you into conversations with people of the opposite sex. It is just a very dangerous, addictive slippery slope that has caused many marital heartaches and divorces.
- Always err on the side of caution. If you veer into an area of internet use that makes you uncomfortable, whether it is a web site or a conversation via internet, just click away. Just as surely as you are always a click away from temptation, you are always a click away from safety. Just remember that the devil works very subtly. What is fun and interesting and just a little risqué, can lure you into deeper waters. The temptation to do something you never dreamed of doing doesn't appear with sirens and warning signals on your screen. It happens in a slow progression and you're suddenly more intimately and deeply involved than you ever could have imagined.
- If thy computer offend thee, cut it off (Matthew 5:30). If you find your computer is a negative obsession or a constant temptation and you just can't overcome it, then get rid of it. If you have to change jobs to get away from it, change jobs. Whatever sacrifice it takes to preserve your marriage and insure your salvation is a small price for eternity in heaven. I'd rather be totally illiterate in heaven than be the most computer savvy woman in hell.

Another large wall that we let the devil demolish in the last half of the 20th century was the protective wall we had around life and its sanctity. Since Roe vs. Wade in 1973, we have legally murdered over 60 million innocent unborn babies in our country. That's not counting the ones we have effectively killed through some chemical birth control methods and/or artificial implantation procedures in which viable, fertilized eggs are discarded. We have killed about 8.5 times the current population of the state of Alabama in which I live. Unfathomable. Just an unbelievable tragedy that can bring tears to my eyes every time I sit somewhere alone and just contemplate it. And yet, I hear Christians often becoming much more upset about the loss of a puppy or a kitten than I ever hear most of us become about the ongoing slaughter in our country. I also know members of the body, in more than one place, who have, sadly, placed viable embryos in the freezer through processes of medical technology that we need to think through before lending our support or participating. Let's take a bit of our study to see the value God places, with authority, on the unborn; and then let's do all we can, with voices, votes and prayers to stop this most unbelievable and tragic massacre.

17. Read the following passages and highlight the parts of them that speak to life in the womb:

Zechariah 12:1 in combination with Ecclesiastes 11:5

Psalm 139

Jeremiah 1

Isaiah 49

Exodus 21:22-25 (This is an often misunderstood passage. Let's discuss this on the podcast or in group discussion)<sup>7</sup>

Luke 1:39-2:16 (In this case look up the Greek word for *baby* or *babe* in 1:41,44 and 2:12,16. Record the Greek here:

18. Most people in America who are against capital punishment are pro-abortion. Find passages that would give permission to exercise capital punishment in the combined readings of Romans 13 and I Peter 2.

The huge wall that has been battered and broken so relentlessly in recent times has to do with gender differences assigned by God. Homosexuality is a sin. It is not a preference, an alternate lifestyle, or a genetic

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<sup>7</sup> Miller, Dave; Piloting the Strait, Sain Publications, Pulaski, TN, pp. 338-344.

trait. It is, by the authority of God, a sin. The acceptance of it, in my judgment, will be the catalyst, for real persecution of people who are Christians and who stand firm in saying it is sinful. But we must stand.

19. Read Matthew 5 and highlight the passage that should prepare us for persecution. Then read 2 Timothy 3: 12-17 and be encouraged when the hard conversations occur.
20. Read Genesis 19 and the book of Jude. Prove from these two passages that the sin being condemned in Sodom was homosexuality and not the forcing of sex against the will of another.
21. Was Lot accused of being judgmental? Find a passage in Genesis 19 that indicates this.
22. Read Leviticus 18:22-30 and Judges 19:22-28. Write down the adjectives used by the host in the latter passage.
23. Read Romans 1 and mark the verses that address homosexuality.
24. Read I Corinthians 6:9-11 and explain how this passage proves Biblically that homosexuality is a sin of which one can repent and from which one can desist. Find the Greek for “abusers of themselves with mankind (KJV) or sodomites (NKJV).

While, I realize that this study has been unpleasant, we could have spent the entire year’s study on the importance and essence of God’s moral authority. I also realize that there might be criticism, in our culture, of this study, for me as its organizer and for you, as you study and pray. But I am not afraid to defend the study. I am not afraid because of authority. Authority is all over the study and it is not my own. I am praying that this short study will help us, as His women, to see that departures in moral areas, are just as much an affront to our God’s authority as are the departures from the pattern of church organization, worship and fellowship. Sometimes, these moral issues are the ones we can, as mothers and grandmothers, influence most. If all the mothers in all of the churches across our country would study what we are studying and then make diligent efforts to put weaponry against the devil’s arsenal in the hearts of our children, we could make huge progress in rebuilding the walls that have crumbled in recent decades. Let’s take the potential God has given us in our homes and restore moral authority in the places we can control.

Practically Speaking: Read Picking Melons and Mates, by Cindy Colley, to a group of two or more children between ages 3 and 12.

OR

Write your best article on any topic in this lesson and send to to [byhcontest@gmail.com](mailto:byhcontest@gmail.com) for possible posting in the “Bless Your Heart” blog at [www.thecolleyhouse.org](http://www.thecolleyhouse.org).

OR

Choose either the issue of gambling or the issue of transgenderism (which we did not cover in this month’s study) and do your own research, listing passages and reasons why these are an affront to the moral authority of our God.

OR

Memorize I Corinthians 6:9-11 and say it to a fellow digger from memory.

OR

Go to your elders and request their consideration of having a purity class for a quarter for boys and one for girls. I will be happy to help with recommendations for material if you choose this option.

## MONTH 12

### *Authority: A New/Old Rejection*

“But I’d like to find a church with less teaching and with more and better living. Don’t you think that would be a good thing?”

It’s identified by the name emerging church. Of course it’s hard to write any sort of critique about the movement, because it is very hard to fully identify. But here’s my best effort.

The name “emerging church” comes from the idea that, as society evolves, a new church or at least a new version of an old religion should emerge from the culture. The emerging church would define its movement as an ever-developing movement—a church that adapts to the culture (in fact is born of the culture), meeting people where they are, accepting them as they are and, as culture is constantly changing, so the church adapts and changes to meet the needs of and even to reflect the post-modern culture from which it was born.

There are so many things we can’t know about the emerging church. The reason is that if a church is going to emerge from a culture, it is going to necessarily have to be an ever-changing church with a fluid belief system (although system is a word the emergents would not like.) But this one thing we can know: the emerging church of today is not the same as it will be tomorrow. If it is constantly being born of the culture and the culture is constantly evolving, so will the church be changing and evolving. Here are some generalities we can try and pin on the emerging church (and come as close as anybody can to identifying it):

Experience trumps reason.  
Subjectivity trumps objectivity.  
Spirituality trumps religion.  
Feelings trump truth.<sup>8</sup>

If you evaluate that list, you necessarily conclude some things that are diametrically opposed to the principles of God’s authority as revealed in the Word.

If experiencing “religion” is better than reasoning or logically figuring out what God wants, then His commands are really not necessarily for obeying. So truth becomes very reactive; very fluid. If subjectivity (what I think about truth) is more important to me than objectivity (what God has revealed about Himself and His church) is to me, then my own mind is really, in my estimation, more important than the mind of God—more important than his communication to me in the Word. (In fact, I become God to myself.) If spirituality, my inner voices, feelings and emotions are more important than the actual worship and service that characterize my Christianity, then I sacrifice any pattern, Biblical model or method—any form of doctrine or prescribed worship or organization pattern—on the altar of the “inner leadings” of my heart and the “sharing” with people who have other and varying “inner leadings”. Thus, there is a very strong ecumenical aspect to the emerging church. It is meant to be a blend of all religions into one movement that does not recognize any over-arching authority. (It’s kind of the same old universalism that reared its head in the middle 20th century.) If feelings trump truth, then there is no absolute truth, because everyone’s feelings are different, so truth is a very individual thing.

Some of the emergents would argue that they believe in absolute truth. They just don’t believe we can know it. They believe we should be looking for it. We should be pursuing truth, but it really doesn’t matter if we ever find it, because the pursuit of it is enough. so it is no wonder that, on a subject like homosexuality, emergents

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/emerging-church-emergent.html>

are unwilling to take a stand. Brian McLaren, whom most would consider to be the American leader of the movement said this:

Frankly, many of us don't know what we should think about homosexuality. We've heard all sides but no position has yet won our confidence so that we can say 'it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us.' That alienates us from both the liberals and conservatives who seem to know exactly what we should think. Perhaps we need a five-year moratorium on making pronouncements. In the meantime, we'll practice prayerful Christian dialogue, listening respectfully, disagreeing agreeably. When decisions need to be made, they'll be admittedly provisional. We'll keep our ears attuned to scholars in biblical studies, theology, ethics, psychology, genetics, sociology, and related fields. Then in five years, if we have clarity, we'll speak; if not, we'll set another five years for ongoing reflection.<sup>9</sup>

Do you see where they are searching for clarity? It's not that they are looking for the will of God. Ongoing reflection is a watchword of the movement. You can see why. Let me repeat: If a movement is born of the culture and reflects the culture, it will of necessity be a fluid (changing) movement.

For our study this month, let's discuss several ironies of the emerging church movement. If you have not encountered the movement, you will. It might be helpful to know something about it, although you will never know how to put your finger on its doctrine, because its leaders pride themselves in not having any firm doctrinal standards.

1. The first irony is a professed humility. "We are too lowly, too humble to think we could know the truth of the Bible. Truth is just too great for us." When I reject the authority of the scriptures, is it humility or is it actually pride? How could a mere man be humble before the Holy Spirit and say he is waiting for a position to win his confidence so that he can say "This seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us," as we noted in the paragraph above regarding homosexuality. Why is truth dependent on it seeming good to "us"? Read I Peter 5, highlighting the "humility" verses. Now read through the entirety of I Peter and mark each verse that refers to obedience, authority of any kind, ordinances, or specific salvation doctrines to which we are to adhere. How is humility really only achieved when I openly profess that His way is THE right way?
2. The second irony is a profession that truth is not knowable. How can anyone say that they have knowledge that truth is unknowable? The question then comes to mind: "Why are emergents interested in having copies of the Word at all?" The Word, it seems, for emergents, is only a story—a tale of God and His Son named Jesus—that is a jumping-off point for allowing the culture to reach up—varied people with very different beliefs—toward heaven while we are all waiting to go together, regardless of our views about truth. One example is talk within the emerging church about "non-immersion baptism." The very phrase is an oxymoron (meaning literally non-immersion immersion), taking pains to even combine opposing viewpoints of scripture into one convenient, but nonsensical term. That term is perhaps descriptive of the whole emergent movement. It is combining lots of very different beliefs that emerge from a subjective view of truth. Can you think of some more oxymoronic or nonsensical terms that might come from a rejection of truth? List them here: (I'll start you off—what about "universal salvation"? If it's universal, then what are we being "saved" from?)
3. The third irony is that the leadership and direction of the emerging church is clearly away from leadership and direction. Clearly leaders have "emerged" in this movement that is designed to lead away from any organized religious leadership. They are writing books and giving people direction away from the "directorship" of religion. This, it seems to me is a power-grab from God's authority...a distinct rejection of

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<sup>9</sup> Brian McLaren, "Leader's Insight: No Cowardly Flip-Flop" via Taylor, Justin, <https://www.9marks.org/article/emerging-church-primer/>

HIS authority. Read I Timothy 4-6 and find what Timothy was supposed to instruct, what he was to reject, what he was to command, for what he was to be an example, to what he was to give attention, to what he was to take heed, in what he was to continue, what he was to refuse, what he was to rebuke, what he was to teach, what he was to exhort, from what he was to withdraw himself, from what he was to flee, what he was to pursue, what commandment he was to keep, what he was to guard and what he was to avoid. Does this sound (in a book where elders were to meet qualifications and be ordained) like there was a systematic order of leadership in the church at Ephesus?

4. The fourth irony is in the catch word “missional” used by the emergents. It refers to the mission of God, as opposed to the mission of an organized religious group. Therefore they are missional when they emerge in communities as a family of believers who congregate and work together. It’s the idea that everyone is on a mission for God all the time. That’s a great concept except that, on this mission from God, we want to be really careful that we do not show people the detailed structure of local congregations and point them to the authority of an eldership in the church for which God sacrificed his Son. In other words, we’d like to be missional without bringing anyone to the fully organized church of the New Testament. In fact, we must really not bring them to any specific doctrines of the Word, because then we would be missionaries (rather than missional), representing the Lord’s church and the doctrines that have been delivered to it by the Holy Spirit. And some of those teachings are not things upon which we would all agree. Read Revelation 1-3 and mark every disputed doctrine among those churches and notice the response of the Spirit to those damnable doctrines.
5. It is further ironic that the cross is the one thing that draws the emergents together, yet the widespread erroneous belief about the cross is the one permeating doctrine that is so offensive to Bible believers about the movement. Read this statement about the cross by Steve Chalke, who is recognized by many as the leader of the emerging Church in the United Kingdom. Surely it smacks at the authority in the cross and in the blood and in the name of Jesus:

The fact is that the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offense he has not even committed [as the doctrine of penal substitution makes it out to be]. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement “God is love”. If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus’ own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil.<sup>10</sup>

What Chalke is saying here is that viewing the death of Jesus Christ as substitutionary is like saying it is some kind of child abuse. It’s God, the Father, cruelly punishing Jesus for somebody else’s sin, and that viewing the cross that way drives people from it. The real reason emergents have trouble believing that the death of Jesus was a substitutionary death—a punishment for our sins—is because such a substitution is only required because our God is completely holy. If he was loving and not holy, surely He would love us enough to overlook our sin. If He was all powerful and not all holy, then surely He could have just spoken our sins forgiven. If He was completely selfless, but not completely holy, then he could have just allowed us into His favor without the sacrifice. But He is holy. Therefore, in the satisfaction of His holiness, the payment and cleansing for sin was the penal substitutionary death of the perfect Lamb.

As Ben Giselbach (<https://www.plainsimplefaith.com>) recently wrote,

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<sup>10</sup> Chalke, Steve and Mann, alan, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003 pp. 182-183 via Taylor Justin <https://www.9marks.org/article/emerging-church-primer/>)

The reason Emergents despise the concept of penal substitution is because of the matter of God's holiness. The cross is an indictment of our sin. Jesus bore God's wrath because God is a holy God. Yes, the cross demonstrates God's love, God's government, God's ransom, God's exemplary selflessness, etc. (all elements which various flavors of Emergents... gladly affirm more or less.) But these are all secondary to the main reason for the cross: the satisfaction of God's holiness. (If you could summarize God with one attribute, it would be "holy.") Emergents hiss at this point. Nothing is more absolutely opposed to the Emergent frame of mind than holiness, as the whole movement is based upon assimilating with culture and the world as a whole. They do not hate sin; they do not pursue sanctification; they do not see the Christian life as a race from point A to point B; to them, Christianity is but an aimless stroll through the mosaic of culture to nowhere.

Of course the death of Jesus was substitutionary. Of course He did it for me. Of course, God allowed Him to die. But He chose to die for us...as a ransom for us. Read Matthew 20 and find the statement of the substitutionary death of Christ. Find at least five more passages in the New Testament that teach this very foundational truth of the gospel.

6. Lastly it's ironic that while the emergents profess little interest in getting into the details and commands of scripture, but rather prefer to take the Word as a broad overview and a loving story; and while they would certainly never say we could be saved by any works of any law, they have, in one sense, introduced a new "salvation by works system." More and more I am hearing the need for corporate worship downplayed by the emergents. "We are out there in the community. We are missional. We are out there building houses, reclaiming a forest, irrigating farmland, digging wells. That IS what we do for him instead of worship."

I was reading about one church that wears the name "church of Christ" that, as I understand it, simply forfeits the teaching on certain Sundays to go out and work in the community in a program they call "WATS"... "We ARE the Sermon". How ironic is it that some would denounce salvation by works, but would be willing to substitute works in the community for authorized worship to the Almighty on the Lord's Day?

Let's close the authority study by reading Revelation 4. Write the words of verse 11 below as we remember why He has all power and authority. And in answer to the original question of this month's study: We can have both. We can have great teaching and better living. But we will never have better living until we are in the Word. Throwing off authority, which is found only in the Bible, always leads to immorality and hurt in our churches and communities. May we hunger and thirst for His righteousness.

Practically Speaking: Read the following article and then pass the link along to someone who might benefit. Think...perhaps one of your elders, an adult Bible class teacher? One of your missionaries? How about a young person in your college group or a youth minister in your congregation? This movement which has a very loose and liberal view of authority will be around for a while. Let's try to inform.  
<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1473-emerging-church-movement-the-new-face-of-heresy-the>