

How do we view the Bible?

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Introduction: In this series we will review basic doctrines that are essential to the future of the church.

A. The challenge to our generation.

1. Each generation is like a relay race, it only takes one to drop the baton and end the race.
2. If our generation drops the baton, it will be to our own destruction, but God's work will continue! (**Esther 4:14**)
3. We must be true to God and thus our generation. (**Psa 73:15**)

B. How do we view the Bible?

1. Almost all religious division has this question at its heart!
2. We must understand the revelation of God is essential to the completion of God's plan of redemption. (**John 16:12-15**)
3. Sadly a large number of brethren within "liberalism" are strongly pushing material to discard the view of the scriptures as authoritative for every religious practice. What does the Bible teach?

I. How do we view the Bible?

A. As a product of a perfect God.

1. God's power and wisdom is infinite. (**Psalms 139**)
2. Anything that God provides man is sufficient for the task it is intended!
 - a. A sufficient creation. (**Gen 1:31**)
 - b. A sufficient law. (**Rom 7:12; Heb 8:6-8; Gal 3:19, 24-25**)
 - c. A sufficient Saviour. (**Heb 7:25**)

B. As a complete revelation of the will of God.

1. **John 14:26** - "all things".
2. **John 16:13** - "all truth".
3. **John 17:6-8** - "all things".
4. **Jude 3** - "once for all delivered".
5. **2 Peter 1:2-4** - "all things that pertain to life and godliness".
6. **James 1:25** - "the perfect law of liberty".
7. **2 Tim 3:16-17** - "thoroughly equipped for every good work".

C. As a revelation that must be respected.

1. **John 12:48**
2. **2 Cor 4:1-2**
3. **Gal 1:6-9**
4. **2 John 9-11**
5. **Rev 22:18-19**

NOTE: There are several possible positions that men may hold while agreeing with the above points of agreement.

1. While the Bible is inspired, **it is not all we need** to know God's will.

2. The Bible is our guide only as it specifically commands or prohibits things. **Where the Bible is silent we are free to act**, with the only limit being our conscience.
3. The Bible is a complete and sufficient guide. **We must have Bible authority, i.e. Book, Chapter and Verse, for all that we do.**

D. As a revelation whose silence must not be assumed upon.

1. **Lev 10:1-2**
2. **Heb 7:12-14**
3. **2 John 9-11**
4. **1 Peter 4:11**
5. **Col 3:17**

Class Discussion:

1. Of the religious people you know, how would these answer the question: “Is the Bible the complete word of God?”
2. Among those who answered “Yes”, how many do you think understand the implications of such a belief?
3. What are the implications of accepting the Bible as the complete, inspired word of God?

Some Fundamental Conclusions: We must know if a teaching or practice is **authorized by God’s word!** We have established that every Christian must be concerned with the question of authority (**Col. 3:17**).

1. Every Christian must be willing to give “Book, Chapter, and Verse” for any practice or teaching they engage in.
2. We must never be offended if another asks us to give scripture for what we do (**1 Peter 3:15**)!

II. How to Establish Authority

- A. What are the principles involved in understanding how the scriptures teach us anything? In other words how does the language of the scriptures teach us?
 1. We actually will be studying common principles of communication in any language, but will in this study be specific to the scriptures.
 2. If these principles are rejected, then our basic understanding of language and logic would fail too.
- B. Authority may be established by **direct command**.
 1. **Acts 2:38** - Here is the command to be baptized.
 2. **1 Cor 11:24-25** - The Lord’s supper is commanded.
- C. Authority may be established by **approved example**.
 1. **Acts 15:7-9** - God by example showed that the Gentiles can become Christians.
 2. **Acts 20:7** - The day of the Lord’s supper is shown this way.
- D. Authority may be established by **inescapable conclusion**.
 1. **Mark 12:24-27** - Jesus expected others to use this reasoning.

Class Discussion:

1. What additional questions should we ask before concluding a particular command is for everyone and for all time?
2. What is the difference between an approved example and other kinds of examples?
3. What is the difference between an inescapable conclusion and a possible conclusion?
4. How would you answer the man who claimed that: “‘command, example, and inference’ is a ‘Church of Christ’ tradition. I only believe in commands!”

E. General and Specific Authority.

1. **General authority** involves all things **essential** to fulfilling a thing authorized. In other words when the Bible tells us to do something, then the things **required** to do that thing are included.
 - a. In order for a thing to be included under general authority, you must have a verse from which the authority is based.
 - b. Things that may be allowed under the principle of general authority may not go against other teachings of the scripture. For example, the command to “go preach” does not allow me to steal someone’s car **(Eph 4:28)!**
 - c. The law of expediency limits general authority as well. **(1 Cor 6:12; 10:23).**
2. **Specific authority** exists when a thing is specified among several possible choices. In this case only the thing stated is authorized among the possible choices.

Class Discussion:

1. Take the following verses and first discuss what falls under specific authority in the passage. Then discuss the possible things authorized under general authority.
 - a.. **Mark 16:15-16**
 - b. **Matt 26:26-28**
 3. **1 Cor 16:1-2**
 4. **1 Peter 5:1-3**
 5. **Eph 5:19**
2. What if someone argued that a church going into a secular business for profit was a matter of expediency. How would you answer him?
3. Can we conclude from only one verse, e.g. Eph 5:19, that instrumental music in worship is wrong? THINK and explain your answer.
4. In class let us make a list of things we use in our work. Then let us give book, chapter and verse for them!
5. Give some common arguments that people make to justify practices that completely ignore principles of Bible authority.

III. New Teachings by Liberal Brethren

A. The primary book I will examine is called: “**The Church in Transition**” by **James S. Woodroof**. Another book we will examine is called “**Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees**” by **David Chadwell**. There are several other books advocating the same things widely circulated among brethren.

1. Do these men accurately teach the truth? If so let us repent and stand with them.
2. If these teachings are in error, then let us expose them.
3. In time these teachings **will confront us!** One of these books has been widely used by churches in the area.
4. Consider the numerous errors advocated in these books.

B. The only thing necessary for salvation are the steps to becoming a Christian.

1. The response provided by this Christ-centered message in the non-Jewish believers was baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. **The transaction was complete; nothing further was required for their salvation.** These people, though different in externals from their Jewish brothers, were now full-fledged members of the same family; with identical access to the Father through the Spirit (Eph. 2:18).....

But there is a sad note. There was a segment of the Jewish Christians which could never accept this universal mandate. They felt betrayed, their distinctiveness compromised, the traditions of their fathers abandoned....

There is a sadder note: Those Judaizing Christians were not the last to resist the transition inherent in the spread of Christianity. **There have been believers in every generation, especially among restorationists, who so revered their own traditions that they felt justified in excluding all other believers who did not totally share their beliefs.** This is purely and simply sectarianism, and all who practice such exclusive theology are guilty of fragmenting the body of Christ. We see clearly that the Judaizers were wrong; we do not see so clearly that, if we do the same thing, we also are equally wrong. It matters not what the amendments are which we would add to the basic message, nor how pure the motives of those who would do the amending. Those who add requirements beyond the fundamental message of God are preaching "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6-9). All who do so are fragmenting the body of Christ in this 20th century as certainly as those who did it in the 1st century .

All who want to transmit the good news of God's salvation to a lost world are forced to answer one unsettling question in regard to what is required to "stand approved before God." And that question is: Once we have preached God's message (the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, his identity as Savior and Judge, his ministry, death and resurrection), and called on all who believe in him to be baptized in his name and receive his Spirit as a gift, will we let that be enough? Or will we insist on tacking on additional requirements which others must meet in order to stand right before God? - **THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION, PP. 108-110**

Class Discussion:

2. Make a list of Bible issues that a Christian must take a stand on to be right with God. Give scripture! (Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 11:17-34; 1 Cor 14:33-37.....)
3. Based on the above position taken by brother Woodroof , which denominational churches would stand approved before God? What

denominational doctrines would be allowed to pass unopposed?

C. All matters outside of Conversion are placed under Romans 14.

1. Paul closes chapter 14 with the sobering reminder that any action which does not issue from personal conviction or faith is sin. He insists that no one should act on someone else's conviction at the expense of his own; to do so is to violate one's own conscience and thus sin. He hereby guarantees the place of diversity in the kingdom by protecting the right of the less liberated brother (or congregation) to hold differing opinions or convictions from the more liberated.

But the very fact that Paul distinguishes between the two in the church in Rome acknowledges the presence of both in the kingdom. No one has to be like everyone else (or anyone else) in order to be acceptable to Christ and to be a rightful part of the church. Weak and strong Christian, conservative and liberal brother are all guaranteed a safe place in the kingdom of God. Let us not impose our own check-list of orthodoxy that would restrict that freedom or deny that guarantee.

He drew a circle to keep me out;
heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle and took him in.

- THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION, P. 128

2. What kind of subjects are the focus of this chapter according to Romans 14:14-20?
3. What is the mistake of the brother who adds subjects covered by Gal 5:19-21 to the principles of Romans 14?

D. The Silence of the scriptures do not limit our actions in any way.

1. "A DREAM OF JUDGMENT"

For **silence surely doth forbid!**

In silence Thy commands are hid." my servant wrote,"
said Christ to me, "For freedom Christ has set us free.

Be not ensnared in bondage yoke

Which we as well our fathers broke.

But **you have stood right in the way**

Of righteous men; you've stood to say,

"Touch not, taste not, and handle not.

And by your laws have brought to nought Good works;

and men that would be saved Are **lost still,**

for they did not have The gospel preached to them,

because **You made men tarry for your cause.**

"Oh! Hellish cause, that makes men think

The dipper's more concern than drink;

That leaves men dying in their thirst

While what is **least** is put as **first.**

What matters if by plastic cup,

Or dipper, bucket, glass, teacup?

When men are thirsty men demand

To drink by any means at hand.

19. WHY put you words into My mouth

In places where I did not bid?
For **silence neither gives consent,**
Nor yet does silence e'er forbid

THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION, P. 187

Class Discussion:

2. Does following the instructions of Col 3:17 leave men “dying in thirst”?
3. Since evangelism is a “good work” then should we not be concerned about “how” we go about it?
4. May we “do evil that good may come”? (**Rom 3:8**)

E. The subjective desire for escape from conflict is appealed to as evidence that division based upon a careful following of God’s word.

1. Notice the questions asked and their emphasis. (Italics added LWR)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you agree or disagree that we (in Churches of Christ) are "**a people of the Book**"?
2. How has this "people of the Book" trait manifested itself in **your experience** with the church?
3. Does the **division and fragmentation** in the Church of Christ **disturb you**?
4. If not, why does it not?
5. If it does **disturb you**, explain why it does.
6. Do you feel a **longing** for a biblical base upon which you **can accept others who differ from you**?
7. Do you, **regardless of the presence of a biblical base, presently possess a personal, subjective desire to accept others who differ from you**? Can you explain why?
8. Do you agree or disagree that the younger generation (35 and younger) "**are not interested in maintaining the denominational differences which have divided us in the past**?"
9. Do you agree or disagree that the younger generation shares with the older generation a solid respect for the Bible?
10. Have you read any of the magazines or books mentioned in this chapter?
11. Have you attended any of the **unity meetings**?
12. Have you ever been involved in dialogue with others who are not members of the Church of Christ?
13. Do you agree or disagree that the **underlying cause of our divisiveness is attitudinal**? Why do you say this?
14. Do you agree or disagree that, in years past, **we have been more interested in debate than in dialogue**? Is this good or bad? - **THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION, P. 24**

Class Discussion:

1. Should we base our study and application on what **we** desire or what **God** desires? (**Gal 1:10**)
2. Do our subjective desires make a sound foundation from which to make decisions? (**Prov 14:12; Jer 10:23; Acts 26:9**)

F. Preaching concerning the “One True Church” is false teaching.

1. We were really naive. Years later, after we returned to the States, a sister in Christ said, "Oh, brother Woodroof, what faith you had to go all that distance to live and preach the gospel." I replied, "'No Ma'am; it was sheer ignorance. If I ever go back it will be by faith! "

Of course, we had convictions and good intentions. I remember the first piece of printed material we prepared and placed in mail boxes in that part of the city. **It was entitled "The True Church." It had enough Bible references (no scriptures, mind you — just references) to drown the most eager Bible student.** I would venture to say not one recipient read that piece. Eventually we learned to letter-box nothing that could not be read between the mail box and the wastebasket.

"The True Church" pamphlet was just the first of several such efforts indicating that, when it came right down to it, we did not know the message we should be preaching. We knew a lot of true things, but we didn't know the message. We knew a lot of interesting things, but not the ultimate message that melts the heart and brings sinful man back to God. The realization that we had gone 10,000 miles to preach the good news but did not know the message was the most rude awakening I ever had. - **THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION, PP. 24-25**

Class Discussion:

1. What is the "one true church"? (**Eph 4:4-6; 1:22-23**)
2. Does the good news of Christ include the message of his Lordship? (**Luke 6:46**)

IV. What lessons may we draw from our study?

- A. We must return to being a people of the book (2 Tim 3:15; Matt 28:19).**
- B. We need to learn to solve our problems on the basis of Bible authority (Matt 4:4, 19:4; 1 John 4:6).**
- C. We must strive for consistency in our application of the scriptures.**
- D. Let us not grow weary in the stand for the truth. God's way will prevail. (Rom 3:4; Gal 6:9; Heb 10:36-39)**

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