

Authority in the Home and the Church

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Introduction

The question of authority is vitally important in both the home and the church. In Colossians 3:17, Paul said, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” Verse 18 addresses wives, verse 19 addresses husbands, and verse 20 addresses children (Colossians 3:17-20). Someone might ask, “How is authority established in the home?” The answer is rather simple: authority in the home is established in the very same way that it is in the church – by command, example, and necessary inference/implication.

Established by Command

Church

Divine authority is expressed through spoken commandments. When Jehovah spoke from Mt. Sinai, he gave Ten Commandments, not Ten Suggestions (Nehemiah 9:13-14). They were not followed by a postscript saying, “If you don’t like it, never mind” (Exodus 20:1-17). In the great commission, Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). Peter spoke of the continuing need for saints to remember the commandment of the Lord (2 Peter 3:1-2). John emphasized the same truth, affirming that God’s commandments are beneficial, not burdensome (1 John 5:1-4).

Home

This principle also has application to the home. The Psalmist paid homage to the power of the spoken commandment by saying, “The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip” (Psalm 37:30-31). The worthy woman “opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching [Hebrew: *torah*; KJV: *law*] of kindness is on her tongue” (Proverbs 31:26). Why did God choose Abraham (Genesis 12:1-7)? Because Jehovah knew that Abraham would command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord (Genesis 18:19). In like manner, Moses commanded the Israelites to diligently teach their children (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 11:18-28). Christian parents do the same today (Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).

This duty of spiritual leadership is non-negotiable and non-transferable. Sadly, many homes fail in this regard. Often they are guided from the bottom up: children rule the roost and lord it over

the parents; the wife wears the pants, acting as the queen bee of the family. This ought not to be. Godly fathers lead, not by consensus, but by decree. When it comes to important moral and spiritual decisions, they are not poll driven. Parents must take a firm stand, saying, “This is the path that my family will follow.” Joshua showed no ambivalence, hesitancy or indecision regarding the direction of his family: “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Established by Example

Church

Divine authority is expressed through divinely approved examples. Jesus taught through word and deed. In washing the disciple’s feet, he set an example of humble service (John 13:5-17). In his death on the cross, Jesus provided an example for those who suffer wrongfully for doing right (1 Peter 2:21-25).

In like manner, authority is expressed through inspired apostolic examples. The day for observance of the Lord’s Supper is determined by this method (Acts 20:7). Paul repeatedly admonished the Corinthians, saying, “Be imitators of me” (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1). This same lesson was also impressed upon the Philippian disciples (Philippians 3:12-21; 4:9).

Home

This principle has equal application to the home. Consider David, identified in Scripture as a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:13-14; Acts 13:21-23). In many ways, David set a marvelous example (2 Samuel 8:15). In later generations, good kings – such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah – were blessed because they followed David’s example of faithfulness and devotion (2 Chronicles 17:3-9; 2 Kings 18:1-3; 2 Kings 22:1-2). So it is in Christian homes (2 Timothy 1:3-5). When a righteous man walks in his integrity, his sons are blessed after him (Proverbs 20:7).

Established by Inference/Implication

Church

Divine authority is expressed by means of necessary inference or necessary implication. What does it mean to draw an inference? An inference is “the act or process of deriving logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true.” It is “the act of reasoning from factual knowledge or evidence.”¹ Drawing inferences or necessary implications is a vital part of the reasoning process. Evidence is first collected and then examined. When the facts point toward an unmistakable conclusion, that final deduction is called a necessary inference/implication.

The Bible often calls upon men to necessarily conclude certain points of truth from other instructions that are given. For example, Jesus condemned the Sadducees for not concluding that there is a resurrection from God’s statement to Moses in the 3rd chapter of Exodus (Matthew

22:23-33). He used this method in reassuring John the Baptist of his true identity (Matthew 11:2-6). This concept also appears in other places in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:9-10). In each of these examples, certain truths were clearly implied even though they were not explicitly affirmed.

Home

This concept has equal application to the home. Parents teach by necessary implication. Circumstances may change, but eternal principles of truth do not (Psalm 78:1-8). Faithful parents will strive to cultivate spiritual values in a child that will guide them throughout life (Proverbs 22:6). This is also suggested in the apostolic admonition, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Like David, we should challenge our children to serve God with a whole heart and a willing mind (1 Chronicles 28:9).

There are many sinful situations that confront modern day disciples that are not overtly addressed in Scripture. However, we are not left without guidance. For example, Paul’s catalog of the works of the flesh concludes with the statement, “and such like” (Galatians 5:19-21). This necessitates serious thought and application of Biblical principles. While they are not explicitly identified, cheerleading, dancing, immodest clothing, sexually suggestive movies, music and television shows, pornographic magazines, even the *Sport’s Illustrated* “Swimsuit Issue” would all stand condemned by their obvious association with “adultery, fornication, uncleanness and lasciviousness.” We must also ask, does the organization of an event change its moral character? Does the prom cease to be lascivious just because it is sponsored by the school? Do cheerleading uniforms cease to be sexually suggestive just because cheerleading is an organized sports activity? Who sets our standards? Is it some official committee of men/women or the God of heaven (1 Peter 4:3-5)?

Conclusion

The importance of Bible authority cannot be overestimated. In the Great Commission, Jesus said, “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20). In all things, let us strive to “Speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11).

ⁱ Excerpted from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company.