

# How NOT to Establish Scriptural Authority

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The Scriptures are clear in their repeated warnings against adding to or taking away from the Word of God (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; 1 Cor. 4:6). In the same way, we are not to preach any other Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Additionally, we are to refrain from teaching strange doctrines (1 Tim. 1:3).

Sadly, such clear and restrictive warnings are ignored by those who do go beyond what is written, in terms of the work, organization, and teachings of the church of Jesus Christ. Lacking Scriptural authority for what they do, they must become creative in justifying their actions. What follows in this article are some of the various ways in which men mistakenly think they find divine approval. I am calling it: How NOT to establish Scriptural authority.

## Call It a Good Work

It is often reasoned, as long as something is considered a good work, we do not need Scriptural authority. The problem with this reasoning is that what we consider "good" may not be an authorized work of the church.

Feeding the hungry of the world would be viewed as a good work. However, the church is not tasked with feeding the physically hungry of the world. Rather, the church is to feed the spiritually hungry (Matt. 5:6; 28:19-20).

Helping people get a secular education could be viewed as a good work. However, the church is to work at giving the saints an education in the word of God (Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:12ff).

There are many works such as these that men would consider to be good. While we as individuals can assist in those efforts, the work of the church, as a collective body of believers, must operate within the freedoms and restrictions of the inspired Scriptures.

## Do it in the Name of Love

Lacking Scriptural authority, some have concluded we can do whatever we want to do, as long as we do it in the name of love. Perhaps, these words of Paul's to the Corinthians would be offered as support for their going beyond the Scriptures, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). The "all" mentioned by the apostle is not license to do whatever we want to do, even if it goes beyond the authority of the Scriptures, as long as it is done in love. The "all" means we do whatever the Scriptures allow and ask us to do, in love. The same apostle told the Colossians:

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all **in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:17 (Emphasis Mine)

To "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" is to do all with His approval.

There are many things that might be justified if love was the only determiner of authority. It is in the name of love that various religious groups today are embracing

same-sex marriages. In fact, this leads to another dangerous method used to establish authority:

### **Do it to Keep Up with Changes in Culture**

This is basically doing whatever it might be, because everybody else is doing it. Many religious groups feel the need to keep up with the ever-changing trends of culture.

In keeping up with an entertainment driven society, worship services have become more experiences of entertainment, as opposed to worship.

With the moralities of society changing and becoming more accepting of different sexual orientations, various religious groups have sought to redefine the Scriptures to be more inclusive of a practice the Scriptures clearly define as sin (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10).

### **Question the Authority of the Scriptures**

How does a group of people supposedly following the inspired Scriptures, which condemn practices such as homosexuality, find approval for such a practice? They begin questioning the authority of the Scriptures! Consider the following excerpt from an article published Saturday, July 19, 2014 in the Orange County Register:

What is the Bible? It's a straightforward question. But for Christians these days, it turns out there's no straightforward answer.

Not even for evangelical Christians, who for centuries have remained near unanimous in their belief that the Bible is the authoritative word of God – until now.

At a time when fewer Americans than ever read the Bible or even regard it as sacred, even evangelical Christians are beginning to ask whether their historic embrace of Scripture has become too rigid, too simplistic and too alienating in an increasingly pluralistic society.

"We're in a moment of history where things are shifting," said Rob Bell, a best-selling evangelical author and former megachurch pastor who lives in Laguna Beach.

Bell is one of several prominent evangelicals who in recent months have published books or extended online essays questioning traditional claims that the Bible, as Bell put it in all capital letters in a blog post, "IS THE INERRANT TRUTH ABOUT WHICH THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE."

In churches, seminaries and online, evangelicals are asking whether the Bible was directly inspired by God; whether Scripture truly condemns homosexuality; and whether strict observance of biblical rules is even possible given the complexities of language, history and culture inherent in biblical interpretation.

There you have it! Once a body of believers becomes dissatisfied with the teachings of Scripture, once the Bible restricts what it is they want to practice and believe, they will ultimately begin questioning whether or not the inspired Scriptures are really authoritative. This is the reason the apostle Paul gave the following words of warning to Timothy:

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves

teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:2-4