

Bible Authority (9): Work of the Church (Part 2): Edification
Ephesians 4:11-16

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** From our previous lessons:

A. Our key passage: Matt. 21:23-27

(1) Here we learn two key **general** concepts about religious authority:

☑ Need for authority: v. 23: “By what authority are You doing these things?”

☑ Source of authority: v. 23: “And who gave You this authority?”

(2) Jesus’ answer tells us two key concepts about the sources of religious authority:

☑ Divine authority: “From heaven”

☑ Human authority: “from men”

B. The Bible plainly tells human religious authority is fallacious (Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23).

(1) It’s vain (Matt. 15:9).

(2) It’s a “slippery slope” of apostasy (2 Tim. 3:13).

(3) It’s spiritual suicide (2 Jn. 9).

C. ****** Jesus Christ is the source of divine authority: Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17

2. **3** We talked about the subject of hermeneutics: the science of interpreting communication (spoken or written); we studied three methods of establishing Bible authority: **Col. 3:17**

A. **Direct statement or command**: explicitly statement/command (Acts 15:13-17; Acts 17:30).

B. **Approved example**: An example of individual Christians, or the church, acting with the obvious approval of inspired Scripture (Acts 15:12; Acts 20:7).

C. **Necessary inference**: only logical conclusion to be drawn from Scripture (Acts 15:7-9; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7).

4. The same hermeneutic is used in human communication every day (e.g., school teachers).

5. **4** We’ve discussed the concepts of generic and specific authority and used the case of Noah and the ark to illustrate (Gen. 6:13-16).

A. Generic authority: “applicable or referring to a whole class or group; general” (*Dictionary.com*).

(1) God gave Noah a generic command when He told Noah to “*Make yourself an ark*,” (v. 14).

(2) The fact God told Noah to build an ark, of necessity, required Noah to use tools to build it (e.g., saws, hammers, ropes, block & tackle, etc.); but since God did not **specify** which tools to use, Noah was free to use the tools of his choice.

B. Specific authority: is something that is “explicit, particular, or definite” (*Dictionary.com*). When God gave Noah the command to “*Make yourself an ark*,” (v. 14); He **specified** several things:

(1) **Materials**: “*gopher wood*” (v. 14); by **specifying** “*gopher wood*” the Lord **eliminated/excluded** all other kinds of wood (i.e., pine, maple, oak, etc.).

(2) **Dimensions**: “*length...three hundred cubits...width fifty cubits...height thirty cubits*” (v. 15). By **specifying** these dimensions, all other dimensions were **eliminated/excluded**.

- (3) **Layout:** “make a window...you shall finish it to a cubit from above...set the door...in its side...make it with lower, second, and third decks.” (v. 16). By **specifying** this layout, all other layouts were **eliminated/excluded**.
6. **5** The concepts of *generic* and *specific* authority leads to a discussion of **expedients** (1 Cor. 6:12).
- A. An **expedients** is an option God permits us to choose to **aid** us in obeying His will.
- B. **Expedients** are only applicable when we already have divine authority:
- (1) Noah already had divine authority to “Make thee an ark” (Gen. 6:14).
 - (2) And, several things about the ark were **specified** (i.e., materials, dimensions, and layout); so, no expedients were allowed when it comes to **specifics**.
 - (3) But, it is obvious Noah needed tools to **aid** in building the ark, but the Lord did not **specify** which tools to use.
 - (4) So, Noah was authorized to use any tools he deemed **expedient** to **aid** him in fulfilling God’s command to “Make thee an ark” (e.g., saw, hammer, ropes, block & tackle, etc.).
 - (5) In this case, tools were **expedients** to **aid** in obeying the command to build an ark.
- C. We noted that even though divine authority allows **expedients** or **aids** we can choose to help us obey God’s commands; we must be careful not to **add/substitute** from God’s Word and claim it is an **expedient**. For example:
- (1) Song books and a pitch pipe are **expedients** that **aid** our singing, but a piano is not an **expedient** it is an **addition** because it is a different *kind* of music.
 - (2) Communion plates and cups are **expedients** (i.e., aids) we can use in observance of the Lord’s Supper, but Twinkies and Coca-Cola are not **expedients**, they are different *kinds* of food and drink, hence, they are **substitutions** and not aids.
 - (3) A baptistry is an **expedient** to immerse believers into Christ (Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); but sprinkling or pouring are not **expedients**; they are not lawful because they **substitute** for what God **specified** (i.e., immersion).
 - (4) When we use **additions/substitutions** to God’s Word and claim they are **expedients** we are acting without divine authority (2 Jn. 9).
7. **6** We also discussed the concept of the **silence of the Scriptures**.
- A. We looked at two very opposite views concerning the **silence of the Scriptures**:
- (1) *Liberal view*: the silence of the Scriptures gives us the liberty to do what we deem best (Martin Luther’s view; we have the liberty to do anything we want if the Scriptures do not expressly forbid it. This view is false, it has led to a multitude of denominational churches w/conflicting doctrines and practices foreign to the Scriptures.).
 - (2) *Conservative view*: silence of Scriptures **does not** give liberty to do what we deem best (Ulrich Zwingli’s view; only what is expressly authorized can be taught and practiced.).
 - (a) This is the correct view of silence and was the view revived by the Restoration Movement (Thomas Campbell: “**We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent.**”).
 - (b) This view and expression agrees with Scripture: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).
 - (c) This principle of silence is followed in everyday life (restaurant example).

- B. ** These two attitudes involved in nearly all the divisions among the church (e.g., Missionary Society, instrumental music, fellowship halls, women preachers & elders, food/fun/frolic, social gospel, sponsoring church, support of institutions to do the work of the church, etc., etc.).
- (1) We should forego expedients if they cause division, because expedients are simply products of human wisdom. They agreed these things were not absolute requirements (i.e., expedients); yet the majority insisted on them despite the division they caused.
 - (2) The liberal attitude toward silence has opened a floodgate of apostasy and led the church into all kinds of error; and is the main reason for liberal vs. conservative churches of Christ today (cf. **Hos. 8:7**: “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind...”).
- C. **7** Silence of the Scriptures: is not a man-made rule, but a biblical principle (e.g., Jesus could not serve as a priest under Law of Moses; Heb. 7:11-14: “our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses **spoke nothing** concerning the priesthood”). ** Examples:
- ☛ Instrumental music: Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16
 - ☛ Twinkies and Coca-Cola for the Lord’s Supper: Matt. 26:26-28
 - ☛ Pouring or sprinkling for baptism: Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4
 - ☛ Earthly church headquarters: Col. 1:18; Heb. 1:3
 - ☛ Missionary society: 1 Tim. 3:15
 - ☛ Extended oversight of elders (i.e., sponsoring church): 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28
- D. **8** The silence of the Scriptures always forbids, with only one exception: **expedients**.
- (1) For example, the Bible is silent about the following items:
 - Lord’s Supper: plates & cups
 - Singing: song books
 - Assemble: building (own or rent), meet under a tree; water fountain, restrooms
 - Preaching/teaching: chalk board, powerpoint, sound system
 - (2) ** Even though the Bible is silent on these things; they are authorized as **expedients** because we have Bible authority for the associated command, approved example, or necessary inference. Using these things **DOES NOT** change the underlying command!
8. **9** In our last lesson we began a discussion of Bible authority relating to the work of the church.
- A. The New Testament teaches the church has a threefold mission; or work:
- (1) Evangelism: 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Thess. 1:6-8
 - (2) Edification: Eph. 4:15-16
 - (3) Benevolence: Acts 4:34-35; 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:25-26
- B. ** Over the past 60-70 years most of the divisions among churches of Christ have revolved around departures from the divinely authorized work of the church.
- (1) Evangelism:
 - (a) Missionary society
 - (b) Sponsoring church arrangement (radio/TV programs, preacher support)
 - (c) Carnal inducements
 - (2) Edification:

- (a) Church-sponsored social meals
 - (b) Church-sponsored recreation
 - (c) Church-supported secular educational institutions (e.g., “Christian” schools/colleges)
- (3) Benevolence:
- (a) General benevolence out of the church treasury
 - (b) Church-sponsored benevolence as an aid to evangelism
 - (c) Church-supported benevolent institutions (e.g., orphan homes)
- C. **10** In our last lesson we focused on the church’s work of evangelism:
- (1) Divine authority for this work can be established by:
 - (a) Direct statement:

1 Tim. 3:15: “*but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

 - ☛ The church is “*the pillar and ground [foundation, support] of the truth.*”
 - ☛ The church holds up, displays, presents, and sends forth the truth to the world!
 - (b) Approved example:
 - ☛ The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch to preach (Acts 11:22-24).
 - ☛ The church at Antioch sent out Barnabas and Saul to preach (Acts 13:1-3; 15:36).
 - ☛ The church at Philippi supported Paul as he preached the gospel in Macedonia and Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15-16).
 - ☛ Church at Thessalonica “*sounded out the word of the Lord*” (1 Thess. 1:8).
 - (2) Thus, the 1st century church was involved in evangelism by sending out preachers, by “*sending forth the word*” themselves, and by providing support for preachers.
- D. **How the work was done:**
- (1) Individuals sent out to preach: Apostles (Rom. 10:14-15; Acts 5:42; 9:20, 22, 26, 29); individual Christians (Acts 8:4, 5).
 - (2) Local church and evangelism: Preachers authorized to receive support (1 Cor. 9:14; 2 Cor. 11:8); churches supported preachers (2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:14-16).
- E. **The New Testament pattern for doing the work of evangelism:**
- (1) No missionary society! 2 Jn. 9; 1 Pet. 5:3; Acts 20:28
 - (2) No sponsoring church! 2 Jn. 9; 1 Pet. 5:3; Acts 20:28
 - (3) Support sent directly to preacher! **Phil. 4:14-16**: “*Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*”; 2 Cor. 11:8 ***This IS God’s pattern for evangelism!***
9. **11** In each lesson we made the point we must keep two thoughts in mind why it is so critically important for us to understand and properly apply these principles of Bible authority:
- A. We cannot trifle with God’s authority (even if we judge the results as “good”); because to do so is showing great disrespect to God! Lev. 10:1-3

2 Jn. 9: “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”

B. Sooner or later we will be faced with situations where brethren are not satisfied to abide by divine authority (“forewarned is forearmed”).

10. **12** We continue our study of **Bible Authority: Work of the Church (Part 2): Edification.**

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **13** What is edification?

A. When people obey the gospel, initial obedience is only the first step on the road to heaven.

B. After our initial conversion we must grow in the faith, and that involves **edification**.

(1) “‘Edification’ is defined as: ‘the act of building; this is used only figuratively in the N.T., in the sense of edification, the promotion of spiritual growth.’ The verbs ‘edify’ and edifying’ are ‘used metaphorically, in the sense of edifying, promoting spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example, suggesting spiritual progress as the result of patient labour.’ (W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words*.)” (Moore, p. 75)

(2) Jesus refers to **edification** in Matthew’s version of the Great Commission:

Matt. 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

C. ****** Spiritual growth:

(1) From one perspective, **spiritual growth** is an individual Christian’s responsibility:

Phil. 2:12: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;”

2 Pet. 1:3-11: “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

(2) But the Scriptures also teach **edification** is the responsibility of the church:

Eph. 4:11-16: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping [“perfecting”; KJV] of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

2. **14** Bible authority for edification:

A. **Direct statement:**

1 Cor. 14:26: “How is it then, brethren? **when ye come together**, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. **Let all things be done unto edifying.**”

Rom. 14:19: “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may **edify another**.”; cf. 1 Cor. 14:4-5, 12, 2 Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:29

Eph. 4:12: “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **edifying of the body of Christ**.”

B. **Approved example:**

(1) Saints converted at Pentecost: were involved in teaching:

Acts 2:42: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

(2) Apostle's companions: Apostles taught the saints who “were assembled together” in Acts 4:23-30.

(3) Saints in Antioch: Paul and Barnabas assembled with them and taught them:

Acts 11:25-26: “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and **taught** a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

(4) Saints in Troas: they met to partake of Lord's Supper and teaching/preaching:

Acts 20:7: “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, **spoke to them and continued his message** until midnight.”

C. **Necessary conclusion:** church at Corinth...

1 Cor 14:26: “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, **each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.** Let all things be done for edification.”

(1) From this example; we can come to the necessary conclusion teaching was an important part of collective activities of New Testament congregations.

(2) We know teaching is edification because various aspects of teaching are mentioned in this verse regarding “edifying” one another (i.e., “teaching... tongue... revelation... interpretation”) when “you [i.e., church] come together.”

3. **15** Teachers in the 1st century church:

A. In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded the apostles to “Go therefore and make **disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16).

(1) A “disciple” is “a learner, pupil” (Thayer); a student if you will.

(2) Thus, Christianity is a “taught” religion: Jn. 3:3-5, but...

Jn. 6:44-45: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:17)

(3) ** It is obvious initial teaching is required to instruct people how to become a Christian. However, more teaching is required after one is baptized:

Matt. 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

B. To accomplish this purpose Jesus “gave gifts unto men”:

Eph. 4:7-16: “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says:

‘When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men.’

9 (Now this, ‘He ascended’ — what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

11 And He Himself gave some to be **apostles**, some **prophets**, some **evangelists**, and some **pastors** and **teachers**, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

(1) The gifts Christ gave are: “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers” (v. 11).

(2) Purpose of these gifts:

☛ ****Reveal divine truth:** Apostles and prophets revealed divine truth:

Eph. 3:5: “which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been **revealed** by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:”

1 Cor. 2:9-12: “But as it is written:

‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’

10 But God has **revealed** them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”

Gal. 1:11-12: “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Jn. 16:13: “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

☛ ****Propagate revealed truth:** Evangelists propagated the truth already revealed:

(a) An “evangelist” is “a messenger of good’..., ‘a preacher of the gospel” (Vine).

☑ Stephen: Acts 7; 21:8 (**Acts 6:5:** “...a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”).

☑ Philip: **Acts 8:4-5:** “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.”; **Acts 21:8:** Paul and his companions “came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven” (i.e., Acts 6)

☑ Timothy: “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:5; **1 Cor. 4:17:** “remind you of my ways”).

(b) Other evangelists: Titus, Barnabas, Silas, John Mark, etc.

☛ ****Spiritual oversight:** Elders (pastors, presbyters, bishops; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4) oversee the spiritual growth of members of the local congregation they served.

(a) The work of an elder, in a general sense, is to “shepherd the church of God” (i.e., “the flock of God which is among you”; 1 Pet. 5:2); “shepherd” conveys the idea of “tending and feeding” a “flock.”

Acts 20:28: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (v. 17: Paul “called for the elders of the church”).

Heb. 13:17: “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for **they watch out for your souls**, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

(b) Shepherding the flock involves teaching:

1 Tim 3:3: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, **able to teach**.”

Titus 1:7-9: “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 **holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**”

(c) The food the shepherds feed the flock is God’s Word:

1 Pet. 2:2: “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,”

2 Pet. 3:18: “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- (3) **Edification:** the overarching purpose of these “gifts” is to “edify” the church; to build Christians up spiritually; to help us grow and mature spiritually (Eph. 4:12).
- ☛ “the perfecting (“equipping,” NKJV; “prepare,” NIV) of the saints, for the work of the ministry” (“for works of service,” NIV; explain would include benevolence; Heb. 13:16).
 - ☛ “for the edifying of the body of Christ” (“that the body of Christ may be built up,” NIV; explain).
- (4) Absolutely involves teaching: objective is spiritual maturity (accomplished by teaching and preaching):
- Eph. 4:13:** “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”
- Eph. 4:14-15:** “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ —”

C. **16** Special circumstances of the first century.

- (1) First century Christians did not have the blessing of a fully completed and compiled New Testament with its 27 books and letters (explain); therefore, they needed another “mechanism” to aid them in learning and growing as Christians.
- (2) We know the apostles were inspired teachers (Jn. 16:13; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4):
- Gal. 1:11-12:** “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
- (3) But, there were only 12 apostles; they could not possibly be everywhere teaching, and preaching was needed.
- (a) Another way was needed to aid Christians in learning the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27; Matt. 28:20).
- (b) God gave various spiritual gifts (supernatural abilities) to the early church; they were given “through laying on of the apostles’ hands” (Acts 8:18).
- (c) Many of those spiritual gifts focused on revealing and teaching God’s Word:
- ❶ “word of wisdom” (1 Cor. 12:8),
 - ❷ “word of knowledge” (1 Cor. 12:8),
 - ❸ “prophecy” (1 Cor. 12:10),
 - ❹ “discerning of spirits” (1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Jn. 4:1),
 - ❺ “tongues” (1 Cor. 12:10),
 - ❻ “the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:10).
- (d) ** But spiritual gifts were only a temporary measure until the New Testament was completed (Jn. 16:13; **Jude 3:** “...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”; Bengel: “No other faith will be given.”; Gal. 1:6-9).

1 Cor. 13:8: “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” Cf. Jas. 1:25

4. **17** How the church did the work of edification:

A. Very simple:

Eph. 4:16: “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for **the edifying of itself in love.**”

B. God has so endowed, organized and equipped the church it is able to completely accomplish the task of edification.

(1) Whatever might be needed to accomplish the task of edification (i.e., expediencies or aids such as place, provisions, and personnel) is divinely authorized.

(2) **BUT**, the church cannot abdicate its responsibility insofar as edification is concerned by turning over that responsibility to man-made institutions (e.g., colleges).

C. The church has the authority to recognize various stages of physical, mental and spiritual development of people as it discharges its responsibilities in the realm of edification.

(1) ****** People have different needs insofar as edification (teaching) is concerned based on their physical, mental and spiritual “stage of life.”

(a) Physical classifications recognized in the Bible:

- ☛ “older men” vs. “the young men” (Titus 2:2, 6),
- ☛ “older women” vs. “young women” (Titus 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:11-12),
- ☛ “parents” vs. “children” (Eph. 6:1-4),
- ☛ “husbands” vs. “wives” (Eph. 5:22-25),
- ☛ “servants” vs. “masters” (Eph. 6:5, 9; Titus 2:9).

(b) Mental classifications recognized in the Bible:

- ☛ Adults vs. children (**1 Cor. 13:11:** “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”; 14:20).

(c) Spiritual classifications recognized in the Bible:

- ☛ “babes” in Christ (1 Pet. 2:2; Spiritually “unskilled”; **Heb. 5:12:** “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.”).
- ☛ “the mature” (**Heb. 5:14:** “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” NIV; cf. 1 Cor. 3:2). According to ability to receive teaching:

Jn. 16:12: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

- Little babies cannot handle a “T-bone steak”; they can only consume milk.

- Same is true in the spiritual realm; “*solid food belongs to them who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*” (Heb. 5:14).
- A class for kindergarteners on the development of the New Testament canon or the Dead Sea Scrolls would not be appropriate (Noah and the ark, Daniel and the lion’s den, etc.).
- This spiritual classification also applies to adults who are new in the faith or weak in the faith (**1 Cor. 3:2**: “*I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;*”).

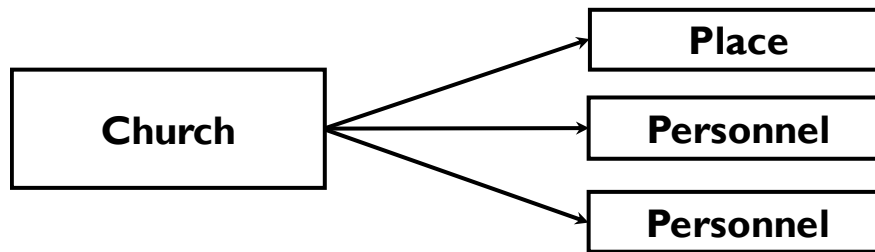
D. **18** Bible does not specify how, when, or where these groups are to be taught.

- (1) Obviously teaching takes place “*when ye come together*” on the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).
- (2) But we also see teaching and preaching “*continuing daily*” (Acts 2:42, 46).
- (3) So, God specifies the organization that is to edify the saints, “*the body*” (i.e., church); but God does not specify the means, methods, times, etc. that we can teach and preach.
 - (a) That’s why we have the authority for Bible classes any day, or time of day, we choose.
 - (b) That’s why we have the authority to hold gospel meetings, lectureships, etc.

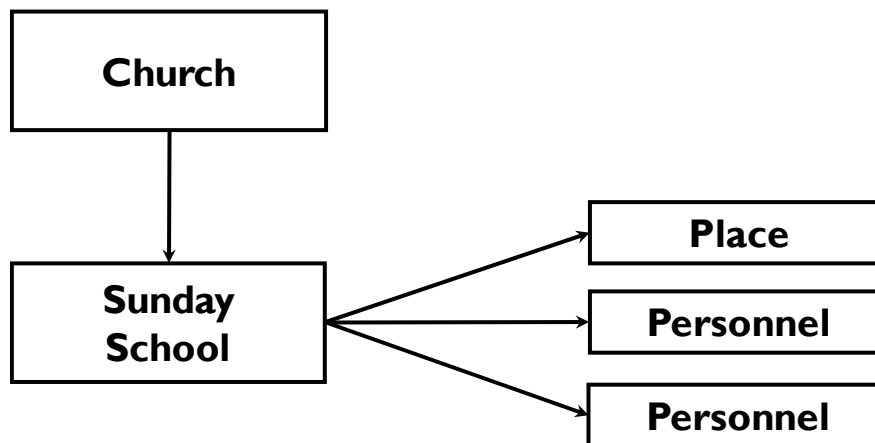
E. ****** Four things are necessary for teaching:

- 1 Place:** a physical location ***where*** teaching is done.
 - 2 Time:** day and hour ***when*** teaching is done.
 - 3 Persons:** ***who*** will teach and ***who*** will be taught.
 - 4 Arrangement:** ***what*** and ***how*** will the teaching be done (i.e., topic, methods).
- (1) The New Testament places no limitations concerning the place, time, persons and arrangements for Bible teaching. Thus, the church (and its elders) may arrange whatever is best in view of the existing circumstances (e.g., our special series on Evidences vs. Sunday and Wednesday regular Bible classes).
 - (2) The local church (direction of elders, if so organized) may:
 - (a) Provide the place for edification (e.g., rented building/room, owned building, member’s home, riverside, under a tree, etc.).
 - (b) Provide the personnel for teaching (teachers).
 - (c) Provide all necessary provisions for teaching (e.g., materials, divide students according to age, ability, spiritual maturity, etc.).
 - (3) **19** New Testament pattern:

New Testament Pattern



Not the New Testament Pattern



(4) Two final notes:

- (a) The Scriptures only authorize one entity to perform the work of the church regarding to edification: the church. I've included the above diagram because many denominations organize what sometimes is called a "Sunday School," which is an **entity** with an organization separate from the church, its own "officers," and separate treasury. The church has no scriptural authority to build any organization to do any of its work (i.e., evangelism, edification, benevolence).
- (b) However, the New Testament authorizes each individual Christian to teach God's Word (e.g., Acts 8:4; **Acts 18:26**: "So he [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.>").
- (c) Therefore, we as individual Christians could, for example, hold a Bible class or gospel meeting (e.g., Anderson's in the UP hold Bible classes at local library.).

5. **20** Church and secular education:

- A. The church is authorized to teach only one thing: the Bible (1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2:42).
- B. The church is not authorized to use its resources for the purpose of secular education (e.g., the "three Rs").
 - (1) Many churches sponsor and/or support secular education (kindergarten, elementary, secondary, colleges; 2 Jn. 9).

- (2) They offer a complete curriculum like public schools, including sports and other extracurricular activities (e.g., band).
- (3) The churches in the New Testament never engaged themselves in such activity:
 - ☛ The church at Ephesus did not operate a “Little Rascals” daycare center.
 - ☛ The churches of Macedonia did operate “Berea Christian Academy” elementary and high school.
 - ☛ The church at Colossae did send funds to support “Antioch Bible College” which taught reading, writing, arithmetic, engineering, chemistry, physics, etc.
- (4) The churches in the New Testament also did not send money from the church treasury to support secular schools of any kind.
- (5) Just because a secular school teaches the Bible, doesn’t mean it is scriptural for the church to send it money.
 - (a) This has been a source of division for many decades among churches of Christ.
 - (b) For example, there are many colleges that are supported by churches (I know of about a dozen or so: Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN; Freed-Hardeman, Henderson, AR; Pepperdine, Malibu, CA; Rochester College, Rochester Hills, MI; Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX).
 - (c) Recall this from one of my lessons on the New Testament church:

For example, “Although several colleges unobtrusively had been accepting contributions from church treasuries for years, G.C. Brewer created quite a stir at the 1938 ACC lectures when **‘many who were present understood Brewer to say that the church that did not have Abilene Christian College in its budget had the wrong preacher.’** (18) A decade later, N.B. Hardeman and others would revive this controversy in a public attempt to attract financial support for colleges directly from church treasuries. (19)” (Wolfgang)(emphasis mine, cvt)
- (5) The need for secular education was just as great in the 1st century as the 21st century.
 - (a) The Lord and His people are not against secular education (If so, I would be in deep trouble!).
 - (b) The point is simply that churches in the New Testament did not build secular schools of their own, nor did they send money from the church treasury to support secular schools of any kind.
- C. This doesn’t mean individual Christians can’t band together, pool their resources and operate a secular school; and even teach the Bible in such a school. But there is no scriptural authority for any local church to support such a school from its treasury.

III. CONCLUSION: 21

1. The Lord has given His church a very simple, yet very profound and important, program of work:
 - A. Evangelism: I Tim. 3:15; I Thess. 1:6-8
 - B. Edification: Eph. 4:15-16
 - C. Benevolence: Acts 4:34-35; 11:27-30; I Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:25-26
2. In this lesson, we’ve considered the work of the church in the realm of edification.
 - A. Every member of the church has a role to play in the edification of all the members:

Eph. 4:16: “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the **edifying of itself in love.**”

B. An important aspect of building one another up in the faith is our attendance at every service:

Heb. 10:24-25: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

3. Edification is the key aspect of our individual spiritual growth.

A. In view of the “*exceeding great and precious promises*” God has given us, He admonishes and requires us to **GROW** in the faith!

2 Pet. 1:5-7: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

B. Spiritual growth comes with a wonderful divine guarantee:

2 Pet. 1:10-11: “...make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

4. We must let the church do its work of edification according to the New Testament pattern (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11).

A. But, there is something equally important.

B. Each of us as members of the body of Christ must do our “*share*” to insure every single member is constantly edified and built up in the “*most holy faith*” (Jude 20).

5. Are you doing your “*share*”?!

6. Invitation

Adapted from the workbook *A Study of Authority* by Billy W. Moore (pp. 75-79).