

LESSON 1: AUTHORITIES IN OUR LIVES

Read *Acts 15:1-29*

- ▶ How did the Jews feel about the Gentiles being circumcised and the eating of meat with blood?

This is the account of the Jerusalem council meeting to discuss what would be required of the Gentile believers. They decided that they did not have to be circumcised to be saved, but for the sake of fellowship with the Jewish believers, they should not eat meat with blood. This was so objectionable to the Jews that they insisted on the Gentiles not doing this.

Read *John 6:47-58*

In view of the knowledge of how the Jews felt about eating meat with blood.

- ▶ What is Jesus telling them they must do to have eternal life?
- ▶ Considering Acts 15:1-29, how do you think the Jews responded to this command?

As referenced in Acts 15:1-29, it is clear that the Jews strongly opposed eating any meat with blood. Therefore, God asking them to drink His blood and eat His body in order to have eternal life is very extreme and out of the ordinary for the Jews.

Read *John 6:66-69*

- ▶ What is the response of the Jews?
- ▶ What is the response of His disciples?

Peter responds by saying; “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

The response Jesus is looking for in a disciple is not that we feel good about Him and His truth, but that we believe He is who He says He is, and no matter what He says or has us do, we are staying with Him to the end.

The key to our lives is that He is the One we look to as the ultimate Authority in our lives.

- ▶ Who or what is currently the ultimate authority in your life?

WHAT DOES GOD WANT FOR ME

- ▶ How do you know what Jesus Christ wants for us?

There are two authorities that Jesus uses to show us what He wants us to do. The first one is the **Bible** and the second one is the **Holy Spirit**. We will look at the Bible first.

THE BIBLE AS OUR AUTHORITY

Read *Matthew 22:29-33*

Jesus is talking to Sadducees- the liberals of this day that did not believe in angels, demons, or the resurrection. In verse 32, Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6.

- ▶ Who does God say that He is?

God describes Himself to Moses, using a present tense verb, I Am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even though they have been dead for hundreds of years. This statement reinforces the truth of a resurrection and life after death.

Principle: Jesus just based His doctrine of eternal security and resurrection on the verb tense of "I Am". Since this is true, we must regard every word in the Bible as extremely authoritative in our lives.

Read *John 10:34-35*

- ▶ What does Jesus say about Scripture?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that the Scriptures cannot be broken?

Jesus is stating here that the Bible cannot be deprived of its inerrancy and binding authority.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

How do we know that the 66 books of the Bible are the real Word of God? How were they written? Who decided that these 66 books are God's Word to man?

Read *2 Peter 3:15-16*

- ▶ What does Peter say about the letters of Paul?

Peter equates Paul's letters with the rest of Scripture. The same Scripture that Jesus stated cannot be broken. The early church was in agreement that the 66 books we call the Bible today are the Word of God.

Read *2 Peter 1:20-21*

- ▶ Where do these verses state that the origin of the Bible is?

Three Truths about the Bible:

1. The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible through men and allowed these men's individual personalities to be seen in the writing. These men did not decide what to write, but were moved by the Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus regarded the Scriptures so true that He based His doctrine of the resurrection and eternal security on the verb tense of who God says that He is in the Old Testament.
3. The Bible is without error and cannot be broken.

MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

Read *Hebrews 4:12*

- ▶ What does this verse tell us about the Word of God?
- ▶ What do we have to do to have God's Word have this effect in our lives?

We must go beyond just reading the Bible and learn to meditate on what it says.

HOW TO MEDITATE

Read *Joshua 1:8-9*

▶ According to these verses, what do we have to do in order to see God's Word have this effect in our lives?

1. **Narrative:** These are the stories and accounts of the lives of people. Example: I Samuel
2. **Didactic:** These are the teachings of truths. Example: Ephesians

We will learn first how to meditate on didactic passages. To meditate on a didactic passage, first read the passage several times. As you read the passage, what is the Main Point of the passage? We will call this main point the 'forest'. Second, look for the supporting truths that point toward the main truth. We will call these supporting truths the 'trees'.

*Example: Read **Ephesian 1:3-14***

After reading this passage, several times you will see that the main point is - God has saved me. This will be the forest of this passage. Three supporting truths you can see are:

1. *God the Father chose me.*
2. *Jesus the Son accomplished it.*

3. *The Holy Spirit applied the redemption.*

As one focuses on the main truth and the supporting truths that point toward the main truth, one can begin to apply the truth of the passage to their own life. This is where we make the passage personal for us. Ask yourself, "How is the Holy Spirit applying this truth to my life?"

Principle: One must learn to meditate on God's Word, or one will not hear His Word and will never understand and not be able to apply the Scriptures to one's life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT DIRECTS OUR LIFE

Read Acts 13:2

► How did the church in Antioch know that God wanted them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work God had planned for them?

Read Ephesians 1:15-17

- What two things did Paul pray that God would give the people in the church?
 1. **Wisdom:** The capacity to understand and as a result, to act wisely. The Holy Spirit, as Author, will give you an understanding of the Bible.
 2. **Revelation:** To make visible, to disclose things that were before unknown. The Holy Spirit will reveal things to you beyond the Bible. Acts 13:2 and Acts 16:6-7 are examples of this.

God wants us to have both wisdom and revelation so that we will be fully accountable to God. The Scriptures teach that God has a call on each person's life, but it does not tell each person what that call is. The Holy Spirit will reveal this when He is sought and heard. In Acts 16 passage, God changes the course of history by having the gospel spread to Europe and eventually the United States instead of Africa. We need the Holy Spirit to direct us as we walk by the principles of Scripture.

A current example can be found in Ephesians 4:12. This verse states that it is the responsibility of the pastor/teacher to equip the saints for the work of service. It does not tell the preacher/teacher what to preach on each week. The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word of God. The Author of the Bible will not reveal something for you to do that is contrary to what He wrote in the Bible. Always check revealed truth against what the Bible says.

Galatians 1:8 tells us not to believe anything an angel from heaven should preach if it is contrary to the Word of God.

Philippians 4:7 tells us the peace of God will guard (same word as would be used for a prison guard) your heart and mind (your emotions and your thoughts) from going in the wrong direction.

HOW GOD SPEAKS

Read / Kings 19:11-13

- ▶ How does God speak to Elijah?

God will most often speak to us in a **still small voice**. God will yell at times to get us back on track, but most often He whispers to us. An example of God yelling in the Old Testament is Moses and the burning bush. Moses is off in the desert instead of where he should be. A New Testament example would be Paul on the road to Damascus. God speaks to Paul and blinds him. Paul was killing Christians, and God wanted him to stop so that Paul could begin on the path of being a missionary for God.

Most of the time God will speak to us in a still small voice, and we will have a sense of peace. If we want to hear God and receive wisdom and revelation, we need to learn to listen. Get quiet and be still (meditate on God's Word) to get the maximum guidance from the Holy Spirit. The number one threat to Christian maturity is not immorality or bad preaching, but noise. We must learn to be quiet before God so that we can hear from Him.

God directs us and influences us using Scripture and through the Holy Spirit. We are like chess pieces on a board where every piece moves differently. The spiritual battle is God's influence through His children versus Satan's influence through his children. If we want Jesus to be the number one authority in our life and to achieve maximum benefit, the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit will need to be the driving force in our life.