

# Understanding The Bible

Growing In Grace & Knowledge: Shelf 4 — Volume 36

The Bible is not difficult to understand. Honest people who come to the Bible with an open mind and a spirit of humility will easily understand those things that are necessary in order to obey, and thus, please God. Though we may not understand all that is in the Bible, God has made sure that we can understand those things that will lead us to eternal life. Our concern, therefore, must not be in reference to what we do not understand, but in reference to those things we do understand and are necessary for our salvation. These things are clearly revealed in the Bible. This is especially true in reference to understanding the gospel. Those things or events about the gospel are clearly revealed in the Bible.

## • God Gives Commands •

We must come to the Bible with the belief that God was able to communicate His law to humanity in a manner that we, through our normal mental abilities, would be able to both understand the Bible and come into fellowship with one another through obedience to the gospel.

**We must not place ourselves in a position of binding laws or religious opinions on one another where God has not bound laws.** As we must not neglect laws where God has bound law, we must be very cautious about binding where God has not bound (See Mt 16:18,19; Dt 4:2; Rv 22:18,19). The following points are some preliminary principles that begin our journey to better understanding the Bible, and subsequently apply its principles to our lives:

## A. Discovering The Will Of God

Through the Scriptures, God has given a pattern of moral conduct for all people in order that we enjoy life to the fullest. To understand this, we must first understand that God is the Creator of all things (See Gn 1:1,26). Because He is the Creator, **He has absolute authority over all things** (See Ex 15:18; Ps 29:10; 146:10; Dn 4:34-37; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:8-11).

God's authority extends to the physical world (See Hb 1:3). His authority extends to the world of all humanity. This authority as Creator gives Him the right to give us law. It also gives Him the right to demand conformity (obedience) to His moral laws.

Because God is our Creator, we must assume that He has communicated moral laws to us in order to morally direct all societies. Without such moral direction, we would live in confusion. **Jeremiah 10:23** correctly explains that it is not possible for us to determine our own moral laws. *"I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man who walks to direct his steps"* (Jr 10:23; see Pv 20:24; Is 26:7). In view of this fact, therefore, we must recognize the authority of God for giving us moral laws by which we can conduct our relationships with our fellow citizens of this world.

**We must also assume that the laws that God gave would be given in a manner that could be understood with common sense.** And it must be assumed that God could communicate His law to us in a manner that the obedient, in a spirit of love, could find unity with fellow believers in obeying them.

1. **T or F:** It is as important not to added to the word of God, as well as subtract commands from the word of God.
2. **T or F:** The fact that God is our Creator means that He has absolute authority to give to mankind moral laws which to live on this earth.
3. **T or F:** If God had not given mankind moral laws by which to live, it is within humanity to produce consistent moral laws by which to live.

## B. The Eternal Authority Of God

Divine authority originated from and was exercised

by the Father before the ascension of Jesus. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have communicated law to humanity throughout history. However, in order to understand what communication is applicable to us today, we must first clearly understand how God has communicated to us in this particular dispensation of time in which we now live.

### **1. God did not remain silent.**

The Father communicated His will to the ancient fathers. During the time before the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father, **all authority and law originated collectively from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.** It was communicated to humanity through the Holy Spirit (See 2 Pt 1:20,21). God, the Father, was King and head over the affairs of all things before the giving of the Sinai law on Mount Sinai. Law was delivered to people through the fathers of family tribal groups. Those through whom God delivered His word were either His prophets, priests or kings. In this way, God spoke directly to heads of families as Noah (See Gn 7:1ff), Abraham (See Gn 12:1-3), Melchizedek (See Hb 7:11-17) and Jacob (See Gn 28:10-22).

### **2. God communicated to Israel.**

In order to preserve a people for the coming of the Savior of the world into this world, the Father selected and communicated His will to the nation of Israel. The Father chose the Israelite nation from the nations of the world. He first communicated His law to them on Mount Sinai (See Dt 5:1-5). After the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was given to Israel, God continued to communicate with Israel through inspired prophets, priests and kings (See Hb 1:1; Ex 4:1-7; Nm 12:6-8; Jr 1:7-10). By inspiration, God directed these great prophets to reveal His will (See Zc 7:12; 2 Pt 1:20,21). Therefore, through the inspired word of the Holy Spirit, God delegated the authority of spoken and written law to the prophets, who in turn delivered the word of God to

the people (See Dt 18:18-22; Is 51:16; 59:21).

When the prophets recorded their Holy Spirit inspired message, that record became authoritative in the lives of people as the word of God. The written word was to be read and obeyed just as the inspired spoken word of the prophets (See Dt 31:9-11; Ja 8:34,35; 2 Kg 23:2,3).

### **3. God communicated to the Gentiles.**

God communicated to the Gentiles through verbally “handed-down” moral laws and prophetic priests. God chose the nation of Israel in order to preserve a “portion of humanity” through whom He could fulfill the seedline promise, and thus bring His Son into the world. In order to preserve the Israelite nation, He communicated to the nation on many occasions in order to keep people from digressing into moral self-destruction as those who lived before the flood of Noah’s day (See Gn 6:5).

The Old Testament as we have it came into existence because of this vast amount of divine communication to Israel from the giving the ten commandment law on Mount Sinai to the time of Malachi. The Old Testament, therefore, was first directed to the nation of Israel. Because the nation of Israel was called to Mount Sinai for a special covenant relationship with God, this meant that the rest of the people of the world would be known as Gentiles.

We must not think that because God concentrated on preserving the nation of Israel in order to bring into the world the Savior, that He forgot the rest of the world. He did not. God worked with the Gentiles through Gentile priests as **Jethro** of Midian (See Ex 18). He even worked through the Gentile prophet **Balaam** who gave his prophetic gift over for hire (See Nm 22,23; Ne 13:2). God was even concerned with the entire Gentile city of Nineveh, and thus, He sent a Jewish prophet, Jonah, to them.

After the giving of the ten commandment law on Mount Sinai to the nation of Israel, God expected the Gentiles to continue to verbally hand down His

moral laws from generation to generation. Though these divinely given moral laws sometimes became distorted through the process of oral communication and tradition, God still expected the Gentiles to live in obedience to their consciences (See Rm 2:13-15).

The Gentiles were a law unto themselves, not that they were left to establish their own moral laws, but that they were left to the “law of their consciences.” God expected them to follow what was right according to their conscience. He expected the Gentiles to do as all men did before the giving of written law on Mount Sinai to Israel. He expected them to communicate continually to their children God’s revealed moral laws. At the final judgment, therefore, Paul affirmed that those Gentiles who lived contemporary with the nation of Israel will be judged by the “law of the conscience.”

4. **T or F:** Before the giving of a written law to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, God revealed His laws to the heads of tribal families.
5. To whom did God first give written laws?  
(A) Noah, (B) The Israelites, (C) Abraham, (D) The church
6. **T or F:** Since the Gentiles were a “law unto themselves,” this meant that they could establish their own moral laws by which to live.

#### **4. Father delegated authority to the Son.**

Divine authority of the Father was eventually delegated to the Son. God now communicates His will today through Jesus, to whom He has now given all authority (See Mt 28:19; Jn 14:24). The Son’s source of authority came from the Father (See Jn 5:19). Therefore, Jesus said, *“I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me”* (Jn 5:30; see 6:38; 8:28; 12:48; Hb 1:2). Jesus now speaks with all authority from the right hand of the Father (See Ep 1:20,21; Ph 2:10,11). As the reigning incarnate Son of God, the Lord Jesus has the right to now reign with all authority from heaven.

#### **5. The Son speaks through His word.**

Through inspiration of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus now speaks with all authority to those who have come into a new covenant relationship with**

**Him.** All authority and kingdom reign now originate from the Son. He is the head of all things (See Ep 1:22). However, Jesus has manifested this authority to all people through the inspired new covenant apostles and prophets (See Jn 17:8).

During His early ministry, Jesus taught the apostles many truths concerning the gospel. However, they had much more to learn when He left them on His return to heaven. **Jesus subsequently promised that the Holy Spirit would reveal to them all truth concerning the gospel** (See Jn 14:26; 16:13). When the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles in Acts 2:1-4, He reveal to the apostles all the truth concerning the gospel, as well as instructions concerning the function of the church. The apostles, therefore, were the medium of continued revelation of the truth of the gospel to the world (See Mt 18:18; 1 Co 2:7-13).

In view of the divine approval and inspiration of the apostles, we must accept the teachings of the apostles as the word of God (See Jn 13:20; Mt 10:40). **If we receive the teachings of the inspired apostles, it is the same as receiving the teachings of Jesus, for the teachings originated from the same source.** Therefore, Jesus' warning of **John 12:48**, that His word will be the standard of judgment in the last day, applies to the apostles' words as much as it applies to Jesus' personal statements (Compare Ep 2:19,20; 4:11; 1 Co 12:28).

- 8.** To whom did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit would deliver to them the remaining truth under which we would live until He comes again?  
(A) Preachers, (B) Elders, (C) Apostles, (D) Deacons

## **6. Father delegated all authority to Son.**

The authority of the Father was delegated to the Son who revealed His authoritative written word by inspiration of the apostles and prophets. The apostles are all dead. However, the authority of the truth that was revealed to them continues through the Holy Spirit-inspired writings of the apostles and prophets.

The apostles and prophets took the mystery of the

gospel that was revealed to them, and combined it with other inspired moral teachings that would continue to be revealed through them. **Everything that we should know concerning the truth of the gospel and our function as the people of God has been recorded.** Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles and prophets wrote down everything for us as the documents of the New Testament (See 1 Co 2:13). **It is this written word that has authority in the lives of all those who seek to be disciples of Jesus** (See 1 Co 14:37; 2 Tm 3:16).

All truth that is necessary for salvation and godly living has been delivered to us through word of revelation (See 2 Tm 3:17). The “faith,” or that body of revealed truth from the Lord, *“was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jd 3). God’s *“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”* (2 Pt 1:3). As students searching for the abundant life, we must search the Scriptures in order to discover the will of God. We must seek for those fundamental truths that give us hope and the assurance that we are obeying God’s will.

- 9. T or F:** We must conclude that there is more authority in the word of councils of men that will guide us in these modern times.

### C. Divine Commands To Be Obeyed

God has given humanity commands that must be obeyed. In order to understand God’s communication through word of revelation, there are some key concepts that must be understood. We must also investigate how God has been specific in His commands. When we understand the nature of God’s commands, we then understand the liberty of choice that God has allowed us to have in the generic areas of application of His commands.

#### 1. The specifics of commands:

By “specific” we mean the definite, concise and exact elements or aspects of the command that is given for one to obey. For example, Jesus specifi-

cally commanded, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mt 16:15). The specifics of this command are those things that Jesus wants us to accomplish. These are the things we cannot change, neither can we ignore them. Those who are seeking to be disciples of Jesus will seek to obey the specifics of His commands.

- 10. T or F:** Specifics refer to the definite, concise and exact aspects of a command that must be obeyed.
- 11. T or F:** Because there are specifics in a command, this means that a command can be changed by adding more specifics.

## 2. Inclusive & exclusive nature of God's commands:

By “exclusive” we mean that the specifics of the command imply **the forbidding of anything that would take the place of that which is specified in the command itself.**

By “inclusive” we mean **anything that is not mentioned in the command itself but is necessary in order to accomplish the command.**

Peter specified that one must be baptized in order to receive the remission of sins (See At 2:38). This command excluded any other means that we might devise in order to supposedly save ourselves, though he did not specifically mention all the theologies of men by which they might self-declare their own salvation. What is inclusive in the command is that one must be baptized. This action is necessary on the part of every person if he or she desires to receive the remission of sins.

- 12. T or F:** “Inclusive” refers to that part of a command that must be obeyed in order for the command to be obeyed.
- 13. T or F:** The “exclusive” part of a command means that we can exclude parts of a command that do not apply to our immediate needs..

### THE COMMAND OF GOD

#### AREA OF GENERICS

Freedom for Choice  
Subordinate Expedients  
Incidental Actions and Aids

#### AREA OF SPECIFICS

No Freedom of Choice  
No Substitution by Coordinates



### 3. The general areas of commands:

By general, or generic, we mean that **one is allowed freedom**, or liberty of choice concerning how certain commands can be accomplished. There is freedom because **particulars are not mentioned in the commands themselves**. Therefore, if one desires the remission of all his sins in order to be saved, he or she has the choice of who will baptize him or her or when and where he or she will be baptized. One has freedom of choice in areas where there are no specifics in the command. **The point is that the specifics of a command add restrictions and the generics give liberty.**

The command to be baptized is generic in the manner of carrying out that which is required even if there are suggestions and examples as to how the command can be carried out. An example of a specific command is binding only if there is a specific command behind the example, or if the example is specifically commanded to be obeyed.

**14. T or F:** The generics of a command add restrictions for the command to be obeyed, but the specifics give liberty.

### 4. Coordinates in relation to commands:

Paul specifically called on Christians to speak to one another in song (See Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16). There are two types of music, **vocal** and **instrumental**. Each of these is specific and different types of music. Therefore, they are **coordinate**, that is, **they are of the same class and can stand alone in existence in order to produce music**. What is important to remember is that a coordinate that is commanded should never be replaced by another coordinate. Though both coordinates may be allowed, one coordinate should never take the place of the other.

**15. T or F:** A coordinate that is commanded should never be replaced by another coordinate.

**16. T or F:** Coordinates can stand alone in existence.

## 5. The subordinates to the command:

That which is used to accomplish what is commanded is a **subordinate**. Song books would be subordinates to accomplish the command to sing. Song books are thus **incidental** to carrying out the command to sing. In other words, **incidentals are often aids that are used to carry out the command, but they are not included in the command itself**. Incidentals are in the area of freedom of choice. Therefore, songs books and tuning forks would be subordinate to the command to sing. They are simply expedients (things of choice) that are used in order to carry out the function of singing. Incidentals are sometimes necessary **expedients**. However, because they are subordinate, **they do not take the place of anything that is specified in the command**.

Incidentals also must not be confused with the command by being made a part of the command. They are matters of individual choice and must not be bound as a command. **If they are bound as part of a command, then they have been elevated to that which is necessary in order to obey the command**. However, incidentals should never be made part of the command. If we have an example of how a command is carried out in the New Testament, we must be careful as to how we follow that example. **Unless the example is specified by the authority of the original command as to how the command is to be carried out, then we cannot bind the incidentals as part of the command**.

When we study and apply the word of God to our lives, we are seeking to serve God out of a good conscience. God did not communicate His will to us in a way that would frustrate our efforts to understand what He wants us to do in obedience to His will. **Neither did He communicate His will in a way that would cause division among those who seek to serve Him**. Therefore, when we study of the Bible, we must assume that it is not difficult to determine exactly what God wants us to do in order to please

Him. His fundamental teachings are always easy to determine.

- 17. **T or F:** Subordinates are incidental in carrying out a command, and thus, subordinates cannot be changed.
- 18. **T or F:** If subordinates are elevated to be the same as the coordinates of a command, then they become law.

**• Understanding God's Commands •**

The following are some biblical examples of how to apply principles that will help us to better understand the Bible. These are all common sense rules. They are commonly used principles that we use in our speech on a daily basis.

**A. Noah And The Ark**

In Genesis 6:14 God commanded Noah to construct the ark out of gopher wood. There are other types of wood that are coordinate to **gopher wood**. However, Noah could not have used a coordinate as pine or oak wood and still be fulfilling the specifics of the command of God to use gopher wood. The command to use gopher wood, therefore, was specific. **Since it was specific, it excluded the substitution of any coordinates as pine or oak wood.** Because gopher wood was specified in the command, all other coordinates were excluded,

**THE COMMAND OF GOD**  
*“Build Ark of Gopher Wood*”

<p><b>AREA OF GENERICS</b> Subordinates &amp; Incidentals Freedom for Choice [Hammers, Saws, Building Plans]</p>
<p><b>AREA OF SPECIFICS</b> No Freedom of Choice “Build with Gopher Wood”</p>

**even though they were not expressly forbidden in the command itself.** In other words, the specifics of a command forbid other coordinates. Specifics forbid substituting anything that would take the place of that which is specified in the command.

However, there were some expedients, or incidentals, that were within Noah’s freedom of choice in order to carry out the specifics of the command. Noah was commanded to build with gopher wood.

How to carry out the command to build is generic. Hammers, saws and plans for building would be incidentals or expedients that would be necessary in order to carry out the specifics of the command to build and use gopher wood.

- 19. T or F:** A specific in a command must be obeyed in order to fulfill the requirements of the command.
- 20. T or F:** The command of God must mention all the expedients before it can be correctly carried out.

This example illustrates show that the command to build an ark of gopher wood had both generic and specific aspects. God expected Noah to exercise his liberty of choice in doing all that was necessary in order to accomplish both the generics and specifics of the command.

At the beginning of the construction, we might suppose that the decision was made to use nails in order to build the ark. However, after many years of construction, suppose Shem came to the “building business meeting” and suggested that wooden pegs be used instead of nails. Since neither nails nor pegs were specified in the command, there could be a choice as to whether to use either nails or pegs. Since nails rusted away, the wooden pegs would have been a better suggestion.

**Sometimes suggestions need to be made in reference to a command that would expedite the command being fulfilled.** Simply because something has traditionally be done in a certain way **does not exalt the traditional way of carrying out a command a law in itself.** If such were to happen in reference to obedience to carry out the specifics of a command, then the law is broken when the traditional way is also made a law.

We must also consider this matter in reference to unity. Suppose Shem chooses pegs. However, Ham wants to use nails. Now there is a difference of opinion around which the two must work in unity. Shem and Ham could build different parts of the ark out of nails and some parts out of pegs. The ark would

still be built; **the command would be obeyed, but in different ways.** They could even work at different areas of the ark using their nails or pegs. Unity would still prevail in accomplishing that which is specified in the command. In using both nails and pegs there would be areas where they must cooperate, and therefore, they must accommodate one another's opinions.

**21. T or F:** In the area of generics, two people could fulfill a command in two different ways, but still work in harmony with one another in order to complete the specifics of a command.

### B. Nadab, Abihu & Strange Fire

The two priests of God, Nadab and Abihu, were given specifics in a command concerning the use of fire at the altar of God. However, they used what Moses identified as *“strange fire”* (Lv 10:1,2). In violation of the specifics of this command of God, they paid the ultimate penalty of death. They paid this penalty because they used fire that God *“had not commanded them.”* Therefore, when God declares specifics in a command, He is serious about those specifics being obeyed as He has so spoken.

**It is the task of the biblical interpreter to identify that which is specifically required in a statement of command.** Once the specifics are identified, then these specifics must be obeyed. However, in identifying the specifics **we also identify the areas of liberty.** God is serious about the application of the specifics. He is also serious about not stealing away His authority of the specifics by our binding matters of opinion and traditions. When we seek to make law those things that are not specifics, then we are elevating our opinions and traditions to the level of law, and thus, bringing down the authority of the word of God to be no greater than the authority of our human traditions and opinions.

**22. T or F:** Nadab and Abihu acquired fire from a source from which they were not commanded into order to minister at the altar.

**23. T or F:** In order to discover the freedom that we have in obeying a command we must identify the specifics of the command.

## C. Priests From The Tribe Of Levi

The context of **Hebrews 7:11-14** is an excellent illustration of the specific and generic nature of God's commands. Under the law of Moses, **priests were to come only from the tribe of Levi**. This was a specific command. However, Jesus is our high priest today and He is of another tribe. The Hebrew writer revealed that Jesus was of the tribe of Judah (See Hb 7:13). But Moses was silent on this exclusion, for *"of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood"* (Hb 7:14). Moses did not forbid one from being a priest if he were from the tribe of Judah when the command was given that priests be only of the tribe of Levi. However, under the Sinai law, the specifics of the command inherently forbid such. The specific excluded any priest from any other tribe. The Hebrew writer's argument in Hebrews 7:11-14, therefore, is that **the law must be changed**. And it was. However, it was God who changed the law, not man. We must be cautioned never to try to change God's commands when He has given specifics.

- 24.** Among the Israelites, from which tribe only were the priests to come?  
 (A) Judah, (B) Levi, (C) Benjamin, (D) Simeon
- 25. T or F:** Once a specific tribe was identified from which the priests of Israel were to originate, then this command excluded priests coming from another other tribe.

### **1. Honoring the silence of the Scriptures:**

This brings us to the point of honoring **the silence of the Scriptures**. Direct commands infer exclusion where specifics are mentioned. **The direct command is usually silent on what is excluded from the statement of the command itself**. In other words, when God gives a command to do something, He is usually silent in the command concerning what not to do in the area of the command. On the other hand, if He gives a command on what not to do, then He is often silent on reasons as to why one should not do such and such.

Depending on the context and nature of the direct

command, **silence of the Scriptures** may mean **freedom of choice** or it may mean **exclusion of any other choice**. For example, in **Exodus 25:10 – 28:43** God gave specific commands to Moses concerning the construction of the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and its furniture. These were commands that contained many specifics defining exactly how God wanted the construction to be accomplished. Therefore, **there was no freedom of choice allowed in the area where God gave specific directions for construction**. In this case, God was not silent concerning many of the specifics of construction. His instructions, therefore, would be **restrictive**. This meant that Moses could not obey the specified instructions of construction by doing something different than the specifics of the commands. However, in those areas of construction that God did not specify construction procedures, **there was freedom**. Moses could make a decision concerning those areas where God did not specify construction.

**26. T or F:** Where there is silence in reference to how a command is to fulfilled, then there is freedom in those matters that are necessary in order to carry out the command.

## **2. Honoring the liberties of a command:**

In the generic areas of a command there is liberty of choice. Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another”* (Jn 13:34). The command here is **specific** in the sense that we must love one another. However, it is **generic** in the sense of how we are to express our love. Therefore, **one has liberty as to how he or she is to express his or her love for others**. The generic nature of a command, however, includes silence. Jesus did not specify how the love was to be expressed in carrying out the command itself. **This silence of the Scriptures frees one to choose how to carry out or apply the command to love one another**.

We have the freedom to resort to other scriptures in order to find examples or even commands that

would define how to carry out a particular command (See Js 1:27; Gl 6:1,2). However, the examples or commands of other scriptures usually give instructions on particular areas on how the command to love was obeyed by the early disciples.

The specific command to love is a broad command. We would not assume that God would give us a list of practices (scriptures) on how this or similar commands should be accomplished. Nevertheless, we do find many examples in the New Testament of how this command was carried out in the lives of the early disciples.

**27. T or F:** Jesus' command to love one another contains both specifics and generics as to how love is to be carried out in our lives.

### **3. Honoring the law of grace:**

Under a law of principles, as the New Testament law of grace, there is always the danger of binding on the church the opinions of others as to how to accomplish the principles of the law. If the obedient do not have a clear understanding of the freedom of the law of Christ, they will seek to bind either opinions or traditions in the areas where freedom is allowed. In fact, if one does not understand the principle that the Holy Spirit expressed in **Romans 6:14**, he will have a difficult time understanding these principles: *“For you are not under law, but under grace.”*

This was the misunderstanding that Paul addressed in the Galatian letter. **Legalistic-oriented Jewish Christians who were previously under the legalistic system of Judaism brought into the church a legal system of justification.** Through law-keeping, they supposed that they could justify themselves before God through perfect obedience of law. The source of the legal statutes they sought to bind on the church originated from their past religion of Judaism. Today, **we must be careful not to bind where God has loosed.** When God has given freedom, no man has the authority to bind. This is exactly what Paul meant when he wrote the following words: *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which*



***Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage***” (Gl 5:1).

**We must keep in mind that the specifics of a command exclude all coordinates of that which is specified.** However, one is generally allowed freedom of choice surrounding the specifics of commands in the New Testament as long as the command is accomplished and no coordinates are allowed to substitute for the specifics of the command. **Those actions that are chosen to complete generics must not add to or subtract from the specifics of the command.** And that which is chosen must not become a substitute for what God specifies.

Because God is silent concerning the addition, subtraction and substitution of coordinates, does not mean that one has freedom in this area to bind where God has not found. **One’s liberty in carrying out God’s specifics does not give him the right to add to, subtract from, or make a substitution for that which is specifically commanded.** Our freedoms must never be allowed to make changes or additions in what the Bible specifically requires of us.

However, **we do have liberty in those areas that do not contradict the specifics of a command.** This is something that needs no explanation. We preach the gospel through gospel meetings, but there are no examples of gospel meetings in the New Testament. We teach children the Bible in group Bible classes, but there are no examples of children’s Bible classes in the New Testament. The point is that the specifics are being fulfilled when the gospel is being preached and children are being taught the Bible. Specifics are being fulfilled while freedom is being maintained in the area of silence.

**28. T or F:** Being under grace means that those laws that guide those who have responded to grace, walk freedom from law.

**29. T or F:** Having been baptized into Christ means that one is delivered from the bondage of trying to justify himself or herself through perfect law-keeping.

## • Direct Commands From God •

God has given direct commands in order to direct the lives of His people (See 1 Co 14:37; 1 Pt 4:11). He intends that we speak and acts where the Bible speaks and commands. This principle is also seen in Moses' exhortation to Israel that they not add to or subtract from God's word (See Dt 4:2). The Israelites were not to add religious laws where God had not spoken. They were not to subtract laws where He had spoken (See 2 Jn 9; Rv 22:19).

### A. Do Not Add Or Subtract

When we study the Bible, therefore, we must be careful not to take away from God's commands; neither should we add to His commands. God has spoken, and thus, He expects to be heard. He has commanded, and thus, He demands to be obeyed. Anyone who would claim to be guided by His will must listen for His instructions concerning what He demands.

**30. T or F:** Since God has given His instructions, then it is assumed that all those who believe in Him will respond with obedience to His instructions.

### B. Do Not Make Opinions Law

In considering the direct commands of God, there are two areas to consider: **(1)** We must seek to understand God's communication to us through His commands. **(2)** We must seek to understand the place of opinion in reference to the interpretation of the commands. These areas of study help us to focus our attention on understanding exactly what God wants us to do in reference to His direct commands.

If God demands obedience from His creation, then it logically follows that He has commanded a principle of life that He expects us to follow. Jesus left *“us an example, that you should follow His steps”* (1 Pt 2:21). He said, *“Man will not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”* (Mt 4:4). Paul urged, *“Imitate me, just as I also*

*imitate Christ*” (1 Co 11:1; see Ph 3:17). It is this pattern of fundamental Christian belief and gospel behavior that Christians must seek to follow. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (Jn 14:6). Therefore, we must seek that way, that truth and that life, for no one comes to the Father except through Jesus (See Jn 14:6).

- 31. T or F:** Though we are the product of God’s creative power, we must not expect Him to direct our lives through instructions.
- 32. T or F:** Since Jesus is the way, truth and life, then it is correct that He would give us those instructions for us to find the way, truth and life.

### C. Fundamental Principles

Understanding this behavioral principle of life depends on our approach to biblical interpretation. It is first necessary, therefore, to be able to discern from the Bible exactly what the commands of God are concerning both fundamental doctrinal belief and moral behavior. When we discover the teachings of these two essential areas of belief and behavior, we have then discovered the pattern of belief and moral behavior after which Christians must pattern their lives.

In order to establish what is fundamental and necessary for obedience, God has given commands that are clearly understood. **He has always worked with His people with the principle of establishing clear commandments that must be obeyed.** Jesus and the New Testament writers likewise spoke clearly in giving instruction. Jesus said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”* (Jn 14:15). *“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you”* (Jn 15:14). He commissioned the apostles to teach the baptized disciples *“to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Mt 28:20). Paul restated this principle to the Corinthians when he reminded them to *“acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord”* (1 Co 14:37; see 1 Tm 4:11; 2 Pt 3:2).

- 33. T or F:** Since God gave us instructions by which to live, then it is

correct to believe that these instructions can easily be understood by those to whom they are given.

### D. Pleasing God

As sincere disciples who seek to please God, **we desire to know exactly what God wants us to do.** We want to know what examples or patterns in the Bible are binding on us as the flock of God.

It is important to understand the specifics of God's commands that are necessary for one to obey in order to be pleasing to Him. There are truths that we learn from the Bible. However, truths are to be believed, and when obedience is required, they must be obeyed. There are direct commands that must be believed and obeyed. All commands are truth, **but not all truth from God is a command.** It is a truth that God cannot lie (Ti 1:2). But this is not a truth that we are commanded to obey, even though our obedience may be motivated by the truth that God cannot lie.

**34. T or F:** Since all truth in the Bible is from God, then we would correctly assume that all truth must be commands to be obeyed.

### E. Gospel Foundation

When one obeys the truth of the gospel, he actually responds to the gospel that leads to the sanctification of his soul by the blood of Jesus (See Rm 2:8; 1 Co 6:11; 1 Pt 1:22; 1 Jn 1:7). However, one's lack of knowledge of the Bible may be the basis for not knowing many truths that are revealed in the Bible that are necessary for our salvation.

**Knowledge of a great amount of truth is not necessarily a condition for salvation.** One may be very ignorant of many Bible teachings, and yet, know and obey the simple gospel events of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, one's knowledge of the Bible, other than in the area of knowing what is essential to do in reference to obedience to the gospel, **is not a condition for salvation.** The sixty-year-old Bible scholar is no "more saved" because of his great Bible knowledge than the recent convert

who is still dripping from the waters of baptism.

**35. T or F:** One's knowledge of the Bible must always be a condition for one's salvation.

### F. Truth Linked With Command

If we do not believe the truth of Jesus' teaching, then we are unlikely to obey what He says. This is the meaning behind what Jesus said in John 8:24: *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (See Rm 10:17). Our belief in Jesus as the Son of God should motivate us to respond in a positive way to His commands.

In order to obey the commands of God, we must understand the system of communication that God used to communicate His will to us. **If we are to seek His will, we must understand those fundamental principles of grammar by which He has communicated all salvational requirements that we must know and do in order to be saved.**

**36. T or F:** God used the common means of human communication in order to reveal His instructions to us through the Bible.

### G. Understand God's Communication

The following are common grammatical structures of language that are used in every-day language of communication. **God has used these ordinary grammatical structures of language in order to communicate to us.** We must assume that His communication is clear enough for the average person to understand that which is essential for salvation. As Bible students, we must understand the following in order to understand God's communication throughout the Bible. If one does not understand these common methods of communication, he or she will have a difficult time understanding the Bible.

#### 1. Imperative statements:

**Direct commands** in the Bible are impera-

tive statements. Examples would be, *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season”* (2 Tm 4:2), and *“Repent therefore and be converted”* (At 3:19). **These statements are imperative commands.** This is the most common manner by which God communicates what He requires people to do. When God wants us to behave after a certain pattern of conduct, He delivers His will through imperative command.

**37. T or F:** Direct commands in the Bible are always imperative statements.

## 2. Interrogative statements:

An interrogative is **a question that often demands a response.** Interrogatives are questions that often have the same force as an imperative command. Ananias asked Paul, *“And now why are you waiting?”* (At 22:16). The implication in the context is, “Be baptized immediately.” Peter asked, *“What will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”* (1 Pt 4:17). The answer that is demanded in the context is that they will be condemned because they did not obey the gospel. 1 Corinthians 6:7 Paul asked, *“Why do you not rather accept wrong?”* In other words, Paul is inferring the command that one should not retaliate if he or she is cheated. One should take the loss and move on.

**38. T or F:** An interrogative is a question that can assume either a positive or negative response.

## 3. Declarative statements:

A declarative statement is not a direct command. It is **a statement of fact; a statement of truth.** As a statement of truth or fact, the Bible is demanding belief in that truth or fact. Or, as a statement of fact or truth, the Bible is demanding that one conform to that fact or truth in order to be well-pleasing to God. For example, Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”* (Jn 8:12). This is a state-

ment of fact. In order for one to have the “light of life,” therefore, he or she must follow Jesus. Though this is not a direct command, it is a statement which demands that one follow Jesus in order to have the “light of life.”

Jesus also said, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mk 16:16). **This is a simple declarative statement of Jesus** which says that if one is not baptized he cannot be saved. This statement is not an imperative command in this context. It is a declarative statement of fact. It carries the same force as a command because it is a fact of action that one must do in order to be saved.

Hebrews 11:6 declares, *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him ... for he who comes to God must believe.”* This declaration is binding, though it does not come to us as an imperative command in this context. One cannot please God without faith in Him.

**39. T or F:** A declarative statement is a statement of truth or fact.

**40. T or F:** Jesus’ statement in Mark 16:16 is a command, not a declarative statement.

#### **4. Hortatory statements:**

A hortatory statement is **a statement giving encouragement or advice**. It is a statement of exhortation, inciting one to do that which is advised. Hebrews 6:1 is a good example. The Hebrew writer stated, *“Let us go on to perfection.”* In the statement, the Hebrew writer is saying that we must go beyond the first principles of teaching and go on to greater understandings. In the statement, therefore, there is the necessity to grow up in Christ.

**41. T or F:** The statement of Hebrews 6:1 is an imperative statement.

#### **5. Optative statements:**

An optative statement is **the expression of a wish or desire**. Paul’s statement of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 is a good illustration. *“But I do not want you to be ig-*

*norant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep.”* In this desire of Paul, he was requesting that the Thessalonian brethren listen to what he had to say concerning those Christians who had died.

**42. T or F:** An optative statement is the same as a declarative statement.

In interpreting the Scriptures, it is important to understand that **fundamental teaching is established by imperative and declarative statements.** However, **inferences that we understand from Scripture by human deduction and logic do not have the same weight as imperative and declarative statements.** These inferences may establish truth to be believed. Nevertheless, those teachings that are absolutely fundamental to Christian belief, especially in the area of commands we must obey in order to be saved, **are revealed to us in the Bible as direct statements and commands.** These truths may not always be stated as a direct command in every context. Nevertheless, because of their essential nature in reference to our salvation, we would expect to find them somewhere in the Bible in the form of a direct command.

From a strictly grammatical standpoint, statements of the imperative mood constitute true direct commands. Nevertheless, statements by any other grammatical mood reveal truth that is to be believed. We certainly would not believe that God would reveal to us fundamental truths solely through figurative language. Neither would it be reasonable to believe that essential teachings for our salvation would be revealed through deductive reasoning on our part.

**Fellowship among disciples should be established upon the basis of direct command or declarative statements on fundamental teachings that have reference to our salvation.** Those teachings, however, that are based exclusively on the ability of human deduction and logic **are always subject to the fallibility of human thinking.** They are sometimes subject to a novice understanding of the Scriptures by those who are new in the faith



or weak in understanding the Bible. We must conclude, therefore, that any command of God that we should obey comes to us in clear declarative or imperative statements.

- 43.** When God communicated that which was necessary to believe and obey in reference to our salvation, He communicated in what two forms of language?  
(A) Declarative & hortatory, (B) Hortatory & imperative, (C) Metaphor & hortatory, (D) Declarative & imperative
- 44. T or F:** Bible statements that are based exclusively on the fallibility of human reason are never considered essential to salvation.

## H. Establishing Opinions

Too much division has occurred among the disciples as a result of people not being able to make a distinction between something that is an opinion and something that is a direct command from God. Likewise, there are some who are religiously sincere, but they do not know the Bible well enough to distinguish between God's commands and man's religious traditions. The result of not being able to distinguish between the two leads many to binding on the minds of people those opinions and religious traditions that are confused with the commands of God.

**Opinions must first be clearly identified as opinions.** And when we have determined an interpretation as an opinion, **then we must not allow it to become a test of fellowship among the disciples.** We also must be able to identify our religious traditions, for all religions groups eventually establish behavioral patterns of tradition by which the adherents carry out what they believe to be God's will. Those who do not realize that they are following traditional behavioral patterns in their religious behavior usually have the greatest difficulty in separating what is essential teaching and moral behavior from what the Bible actually commands. The following are some points that will help us to determine the place of opinions in Christian fellowship:

- 45. T or F:** The first step in not allowing opinions to be matters of division among brethren is to first identify a particular teaching as an opinion or religious tradition.

## 1. Opinions derived from human reasoning.

Opinions concerning the interpretation of Scripture are often derived by human deductions and logic. They are developed by human reasoning concerning statements that are made in the Bible. Fortunately, opinions are generally true. However, their correctness may be limited to a particular culture or education on the part of the one making them. In other words, **one person's opinions may carry more weight because of years of experience and Bible study.** On the other hand, **another's opinions may be limited by inexperience or lack of Bible knowledge.** If the opinions of the stronger or experienced brother, therefore, are made to reign over the opinions of the weaker brother, then the weaker brother can be greatly intimidated. If the stronger, more educated brother is faulty in his or her Christian attitude, he or she may look down on the less educated member and not consider his or her opinions. For this reason, Christians should be careful concerning their opinions. **Their opinions must not become the test upon which fellowship among believers is either made or broken** (See Rm 14).

**46. T or F:** The opinions of the older, and more knowledgeable, must be considered binding on the church.

**47. T or F:** Because opinions are the result of human reasoning, they must always be questions, and thus, not made a test of fellowship.

## 2. Opinions are not tests of fellowship.

Because opinions are derived from human reasoning, and not declarative statements or direct commands, **they cannot be made a test for determining fellowship among the brethren.** Neither can they be made a test for breaking fellowship. We must not allow one person's reasoning ability to become the standard to determine truth, or for the behavior of the saints. This is undoubtedly what Paul referred to in 2 Timothy 3:7 when he said that there were those who were ***“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”***

Though one may have studied the Bible for many years, his or her opinions of interpretation in certain areas may be wrong because he or she has a wrong attitude. Many years of Bible study do not guarantee correct interpretation.

**48. T or F:** Many years of Bible study will guaranteed that one's opinions are true.

Every Christian must seek harmony with his or her brother or sister in Christ. This concept is certainly in the context of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:23,24: *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful; all things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being."* An atmosphere that is free of intimidation must always exist among the members of the body where every member is encouraged to study the Scriptures. The intellect and logic of one individual must not be set against another in the realm of opinion (See Js 4:11,12). One's years of Bible study can be respected, but in the area of opinions years of Bible study does not make opinions the law for the church.

**49. T or F:** In Bible study, the church must work toward and atmosphere that individual Bible study and interpretation is encouraged.

### • Examples Of Obedience •

Throughout the Bible there are examples of how the people of God served God and responded to His love for them. Examples of service and obedience to God have been recorded in order to give us a better understanding and application for the instructions of God that are revealed in the Bible. When one studies the Bible, therefore, he or she discovers many examples of how men and women responded to God. The example of the early Christians' lives furnishes us with a model to illustrate the response of the people who seek to live the gospel. This was the meaning behind Paul's statement in 2 Corin-

ans 4:15: *“For all things [of the gospel] are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.”*

We must keep in mind that because the Holy Spirit recorded a particular example of the response of the early Christians to the gospel that He did not mean that their example should be bound as law simply because the example of obedience was recorded. **If God intended that the record of an example of obedience of the New Testament Christians constituted a statement of law, then we would be bound to follow every example of the New Testament.** As we will discover later, this would lead us to be very inconsistent in our service to God, if not very divisive of the body of Christ. In fact, it would make unity in service to God impossible.

All of us desire to allow God to direct our beliefs and behavior through His word. We want to be biblical in the sense of doing that which God requires of us. However, we want to *“rightly divide the word of truth”* in order to produce unity of believers and confidence in our own lives that we are pleasing to God (2 Tm 2:15).

**50. T or F:** Examples of obedience are recorded in the Bible in order to illustrate how God's people responded to His instructions.

**51. T or F:** Because examples of people who lived in response to the gospel were recorded means that the examples should be considered to be the law of God.

### A. The Purpose Of Examples

To the church in Corinth, Paul wrote, *“Now all these things [in Israel] happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition”* (1 Co 10:11). **We are to receive admonition from recorded examples of the lives of those who lived in Old Testament times.** Also in reference to Old Testament events, Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, *“For whatsoever things were written before were written for our learning”* (Rm 15:4). We are to learn from recorded Old Testament examples. We learn from those who either responded positively

or negatively to the will of God.

Paul told the Corinthians, *“Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ”* (1 Co 11:1). Paul did establish himself as a “model” to be followed as he so expressed himself to the Philippians (See Ph 4:9). Likewise, he instructed Timothy, *“Be an example to the believers”* (1 Tm 4:12; see Ti 2:7). He told elders to be *“examples to the flock”* (1 Pt 5:3). He stated that churches were examples to other churches (See 1 Th 1:6-8; 2:14; 2 Co 9:2). Therefore, examples we read in the Bible are important for our **learning what we can do** in order to respond to the will of God.

From the above statements in Scripture, we must conclude that the recorded examples of the early Christians should play an important part in our lives as Christians today. After all, the Holy Spirit had many of the examples of the early Christians recorded for our learning. However, we would be cautious here because those negative responses to the will of God that are recorded would be **patterns of behavior that we should not do**. Positive responses as examples would define acceptable examples of how we can respond to the will of God.

**52. T or F:** Those things that were recorded in the Old Testament concerning the behavior of the Israelites were written for our learning and admonition.

The following points help us better understand the purpose of these examples as they are recorded in the New Testament and applied to our lives:

### **1. Examples give warnings.**

The Old Testament examples were preserved in order to provide warnings for New Testament Christians (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). The disobedience of the Old Testament people of God *“became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted”* (1 Co 10:6). Sodom and Gomorrah *“are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”* (Jd 7; see 2 Pt 2:6). The Hebrew writer concluded, *“Let us therefore be*

*diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience”* (Hb 4:11).

As the Old Testament examples were recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order to give New Testament Christians (and us) examples, **so the Holy Spirit inspired the recording of examples of the first century Christians in order to provide us today with examples of obedience and disobedience.** It would be fair to conclude that we should approach the New Testament examples as the Holy Spirit instructed the first Christians to approach the Old Testament examples, that is, for admonition and learning (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

We have the advantage today of two sources of inspired literature for understand how God wants us to apply examples in our lives. The first century Christians had the record of Old Testament Scriptures. We today have both the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament Scriptures.

- 53.** Which cities became an example of the vengeance of God?  
 (A) Nineveh & Babylon, (B) Sodom & Gomorrah, (C) Sodom & Jerusalem,  
 (D) Samaria & Gomorrah
- 54. T or F:** The example of both the Old and New Testaments give us illustrations as to how we should react to the behavior of God through history who either pleased or displeased God.

## **2. Examples give models.**

There are actually four Greek words that are translated “example” in the English New Testament. **Hypogrammos** is used only once (See 1 Pt 2:21). It is used with reference to Jesus leaving us a “pattern” or “model” of suffering that we should follow. *“Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”* This **does not mean** that we should go out and intentionally seek to suffer in the exact same manner in which Jesus suffered, and consequently, die on a literal cross. We will suffer after Jesus’ pattern of suffering, but our suffering will often be in a different manner (See 1 Pt 4:16). The example of Jesus only expresses a pattern of suffering that Christians must accept if the occasion calls for such. Anyone who would choose to live the gos-

pel that Jesus lived, will suffer in the same way He suffered (See Lk 14:25-45).

The Greek word **deigma** is also used once in the New Testament (See Jd 7). It refers to something “standing as a model” or “example.” The Greek word **hupodeigma** also means an example, model or pattern. It is used several times in the New Testament. **It usually refers to a bad model or example that one should not follow** (See Hb 4:11).

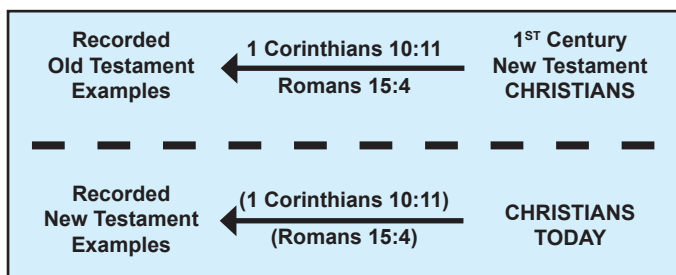
The most common Greek word used in reference to examples is **tupos**. This, and the other three Greek words, are translated “example” and carry the meaning of “pattern” or “model.” This is the concept of a model that is expressed in passages as John 13:15: *“For I [Jesus] have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”* This statement was made in the context of washing feet. However, Jesus was not saying that we should literally wash feet as a unique behavior of the church. **The illustration of the example is humble service to one another.**

This statement of Jesus should caution us about making a binding practice out of certain examples that were meant to teach a greater lesson than the example itself. Jesus, and the other early Christians, had a right to use common cultural practices of their day in order to illustrate greater spiritual lessons. Therefore, **we must caution ourselves about making law those examples they only used to illustrate gospel behavior.** If we do not understand this, then we will miss the entire point of what Jesus and the disciples intended to teach.

Therefore, examples can be role models for us to imitate, **but not obey as law.** They give us a goal to which to aspire. They illustrate spiritual concepts that we must accept into our behavior. Examples illustrate the extent or manner by which sincere believers responded to the gospel in the first century.

In the context of this point, the exhortation Paul made to the Roman and Corinthian Christians concerning the Old Testament characters would reason-

ably be applied to Christians today looking back to the first century Christians. Paul set forth the Old Testament characters as examples that the early Christians (and us) must seriously consider (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). However, not all of the examples of the Old Testament characters were good. Nevertheless, in the Old Testament there were many models of faithfulness such as those mentioned in Hebrews 11. Therefore, **we should apply the same principle of interpretation to the many examples in the New Testament as Paul exhorted the first century Christians to consider all the examples of behavior in the Old Testament times.**



In both the Old and New Testaments, there are good examples to follow and bad examples to shun. Paul did not set these models or examples as law to be elevated to be equal in authority as the commands of God. He only exhorted Christians to look at the examples of Old Testament characters in their response to the will of God. He wanted us to see the spiritual application of the examples of the Old Testament believers in their response to the will of God.

We should, therefore, approach New Testament examples with this same principle of application. In the New Testament examples we are given insight into how people can respond to the gospel. And in this area we have a choice as to how we would respond to the will of God.

**55. T or F:** The most common word used in the New Testament in reference to an example, is the Greek word *deigma*.

**56. T or F:** Examples illustrate the extent or manner by which sincere believers responded to the gospel in the first century.



### 3. Examples edify.

Paul used the example of the zeal of the Corinthian disciples to stir up many other disciples in other locations (See 2 Co 9:2). The gospel response of the Thessalonian disciples edified all the Christians throughout Macedonia and Achaia (See 1 Th 1:6-8). The generous spirit of sacrifice and contribution of the Macedonian Christians was used to motivate the Corinthians to likewise respond to the gospel (See 2 Co 8:1-3). Paul's personal boldness of preaching while in prison encouraged others to be bold in Rome (See Ph 1:12-14).

The example of the faithful Old Testament heroes of faith edifies us today to become stronger and to press on to the goal of heaven (See Hb 12:1-3). We encourage others to glorify God by our example of living the gospel (Mt 5:16), though our examples can also have a negative effect on others if we do not live according to the gospel (See 1 Co 8:10). Therefore, the examples or models of faithfulness of the early Christians give us encouragement. We are edified by their lives of faithfulness (See Rv 2:13), zeal (See At 8:4), and generosity (See At 4:34,35; 2 Co 8:1-5). In this sense, we refer to their responses to the gospel in order to better our lives today.

The examples of New Testament Christians in the above sense were never recorded for the purpose of establishing law to be obeyed. **Examples are simply illustrations of how others responded either in a positive or negative way to the word of God.** They were recorded to motivate, stimulate and encourage us to respond in a positive manner to the gospel of Jesus. We are edified by the early Christians' response to God's will. This edification should motivate us to also respond to the gospel in a similar manner, though not necessarily in the same way as the recorded examples in the New Testament.

**57.** The disciples in what city were used by Paul as an example of zeal in response to the gospel?

(A) Thessalonica, (B) Jerusalem, (C) Rome, (D) Achaia

**58. T or F:** The recorded examples give us today an illustration of how the early Christians responded to the gospel.

#### 4. Examples clarify and apply commands.

When we study how the early believers obeyed the commands of God, we can often better understand what the commands implied. Jesus commanded His disciples immediately before His ascension to make disciples and to teach them *“to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Mt 28:20). The disciples’ “observance” (obedience) of Jesus’ commands gives us an example that spurs us on to obedience.

The New Testament, therefore, **is both a record of the commands that the apostles gave to the early disciples and a record of how infant disciples struggled to live in response to the gospel.** We must be cautious, therefore, in how we view the inspired record of their examples of how they responded to the gospel. Certainly, these examples of obedience were not perfect as our obedience would likewise not be perfect.

**Because the first disciples had personal contact with the apostles themselves does not necessitate that their examples of obedience should be elevated to the authority of the commands of the apostles.** This is where we as Bible students must be very careful in studying the subject of examples. **Simply because we read of someone’s action in the New Testament does not automatically assume that that action is a binding law on Christians today.** To elevate such examples to binding laws is to misunderstand the whole point of why the Holy Spirit had the examples recorded in the first place.

**59. T or F:** We must understand, or interpret, the example of obedience of the first Christians with the understanding that they were new Christians responding to the will of God.

**60. T or F:** We must conclude that because the Holy Spirit recorded an example of obedience of the early Christians, their examples of obedience must be considered law for us to obey today.

#### 5. Examples illustrate obedience.

The examples of obedience by the first Christians give us **an indication of how commands can be obeyed.** For example, the early disciples baptized

repentant believers in rivers and lakes. These are open bodies of water. These examples give us an indication of how the command to baptize people can be obeyed. However, such examples do not exclude constructed baptisteries for baptisms, though constructed baptisteries are not mentioned in the New Testament.

The early Christians in Jerusalem *“had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need”* (At 2:44,45; see 4:34,35). Here is an example that is not binding on Christians outside the historical context in which it took place. If it is an example that must be bound as law today, then when one becomes a Christian, he or she must sell what he or she has and give to others. But this would be taking the example out of its historical context.

In the historical context, Jews had journeyed from throughout the Roman world to come to the Passover/Pentecost feast in Jerusalem. They brought enough provisions or funds with them to reside in Jerusalem from Passover to Pentecost, which was a period of fifty days. But after the feast, they planned to return home. However, many of these people obeyed the gospel, and subsequently sought to stay on in Jerusalem in order to be taught further by the apostles (See At 2:42). The visitors, therefore, **simply ran out of provisions.**

This was then the time for the local Christians to step in and give an example of gospel behavior according to what John wrote in 1 John 3:17: *“Whoever has this world’s goods and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him.”* The local Jerusalem Christians loved their new brothers and sisters in Christ, and thus, **they chose to sell their local possessions in order to keep the visitors in Jerusalem as long as possible before they had to go home.** The local brethren knew that when those visitors went forth, they would go forth preaching the gospel to the Jews in the synagogues from where they

came. The example of Act 2:44,45, therefore, was an evangelistic statement after what John wrote to and of Gaius in 1 John 5-8.

In Acts 5 it is recorded that Ananias and Sapphira sold some of their possessions. Unfortunately, they lied to the Holy Spirit concerning the amount for which the possessions were sold (See At 5:1,2). Nevertheless, Peter said to them that *“while it remained, was it not your own?”* (At 5:4). In other words, they were not under any obligation to follow the example of what other Christians were doing in the matter of selling possessions and giving. We must also keep in mind that this was an “approved example” by the apostles to sell the possessions. The apostles approved the selling of the possessions and giving to those in need. **But this approved example was not binding on Christians as a law.** What the Christians did was only an illustration of how Christians can respond to the gospel.

We must be cautioned, therefore, about binding examples of the first century Christians on ourselves today. **An example without the backing of a command cannot be bound upon Christians or made a test of fellowship.** Though there may be a direct command behind the example, **the example itself may be only one way by which the command can be carried out in the lives of Christians.** The context in which the example rests must be thoroughly studied in order to determine its application to us today.

- 61. T or F:** The example of the early Christians in Jerusalem selling their possessions and goods to give to other is binding as a law on every person today who is baptized.
- 62. T or F:** Ananias and Sapphira had the right to keep their possessions.
- 63. T or F:** In order for an example to be considered binding, there must be a commandment that is directly linked to the example.

## B. The Nature Of Examples

Most of the difficulty concerning the subject of examples is centered around the nature of the example itself. It is for this reason that we must understand

the relationship of examples with direct commands. Since this is the area where most people misunderstand the inspired record of the behavior of the first century Christians, it is important to establish a consistent manner by which we approach the examples of the New Testament.

## **1. Binding Examples must find authority in commands.**

**Examples do not have inherent authority.** They do not have authority simply because they are recorded in the Bible. Therefore, it would be quite difficult to say that an example is binding if there were no direct command that stood behind the example. The recorded example that a particular individual or individuals did something in the first century **does not make the example of their behavior a law of God.**

**Examples are never given the same authority in the Bible as direct commands.** An example would be binding only if there is a command that stands behind it. Because of this, the example, without a command behind it, can never carry the same authority as a command. The authority of any example we would bind on ourselves must have a background command. It is thus the command that is obeyed, not the example as we see it recorded in the Bible.

Now consider the relationship of **an example with the generic and specific aspects of a command or declarative statement.** In reference to the specific details of a command, **the example of obedience illustrates a specific way that the command or declarative statement can be carried out.** In reference to the generic aspects of a command, **the example illustrates only one way a command could possibly be fulfilled.**

Though written as a sarcasm in its original context, wherein even religious unbelievers were taking care of orphans and widows, James somewhat chided the lazy and unconcerned Christians to whom he

wrote the following: *“Pure and undefiled religion ... is this: to take of ... widows”* (Js 1:27). In other words, if even religious unbelievers take care of their orphans and widows, then certainly a Christian’s faith must be expressed in doing at least the same.

The specific aspect of this declarative statement is to take care of widows. If one would have “pure religion,” then he or she must be willing to take care of widows as the unbelieving religionists do in their community. However, **this statement is generic in the sense that no system of caring is defined within the statement itself.** It is specific in the sense that widows are to be care for if one would be as those who have “pure religion.” But if there are no widows for which to care, one is still a child of God.

Acts 6 is only one example of how widows were cared for in the early church. However, the continued revelation of Paul gave specific instructions as to who was to be classified as an eligible widow for the care of the church (See 1 Tm 5:3-16). Paul was quite strict in this matter, for only those sisters who had rendered great faithfulness were to be enrolled as a widow for which the church had responsibility. The church did not fall under a mandate of taking care of all the widows in the community. In taking care of widows, therefore, there is much that lies within the area of choice as to how the command is to be carried out, and to whom the care is to be given.

**A command often has general elements as to how the specifics are to be carried out.** The recorded examples in the New Testament are often illustrations of how commands were carried out by the early Christians. We would not, therefore, bind the example in Acts 6 of “appointing seven men” concerning the administration to widows. This was a “command” of the apostles to the disciples in Jerusalem in that historical context. What is important is that the specific command to care for widows was being obeyed. The incidentals surrounding the en-

actment of the command are not binding examples.

With the generics of a command, **the New Testament example is usually only one option of how the command is fulfilled.** Jesus commanded, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mk 16:15). The command to go into all the world is **specific**. However, the manner or means by which one is to go is **generic**. If one goes by walking, then his example is only one illustration of how the command can be fulfilled. Going by ship, as Paul, is another example. However, neither the going by walking or by ship is binding, though they are New Testament examples of how the early Christians went into all the world.

The Bible student must understand that the specifics of the commands are what is important. And it is upon the specifics of the commands, not the examples of how the command is carried out, that the foundation for unity is maintained. To do this, we must understand that examples **allow liberty by manifesting the liberty by which the New Testament Christians obeyed God. They can be permissive in that they allow freedom of choice.**

**The example gives us permission as to how a command can be obeyed.** As the apostles gave an example of how they went into all the world to fulfill the command of Jesus to do forth and preach the gospel, we must not assume that we should bind their examples as law, knowing that how they obeyed the great commission to go into all the world was only one way it can be accomplished. We must choose today how we will fulfill the command of Jesus to go into all the world.

- 66. T or F:** Reference to taking care of widows does not include how this is to be done.
- 67. T or F:** The appointing of seven (7) men to take care of widows is a binding example for the church today, since the original appointing of the men was commanded by the apostles.
- 68. T or F:** A command may be specific in its pronouncement, but how the command is carried out can be generic.

## **2. Examples allow liberty of choice.**

In order to determine whether an example is bind-

ing, we can use the illustration of the life of Jesus. We must imitate Jesus or follow in His steps (See Jn 13:15; 1 Pt 2:21). But not everything that Jesus did is binding on us today.

- ▶ Jesus fasted (See Mt 4:2).
- ▶ Jesus taught in synagogues (See Mt 9:35).
- ▶ Jesus taught while sitting down (See Mt 5:1; 13:2).
- ▶ Jesus taught by parables (See Mt 13).
- ▶ Jesus prayed on mountains (See Mt 14:23).
- ▶ Jesus taught in the temple of Jerusalem (See Mt 26:55)
- ▶ Jesus taught in houses (See Mt 8:14; 9:10,23,28; Lk 20:36).
- ▶ Jesus kept the Passover/Pentecost feasts (See Jn 2:13).

Simply because Jesus did these things does not mean that they are binding as law on Christians today. **They can be binding only if there is a command that they be bound.**

There are several historical incidental events surrounding Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper (See Lk 22:7-23). We would consider these **incidentals** at the time He ate the Jewish Passover with the disciples, during which He instituted the Supper. The disciples partook of the Supper in a city, in a guest room, in an upper room, and in a reclining position. Only men partook of it, and they probably used only one cup. Jesus instituted the Supper during the Jewish Passover feast. In so instituting His Supper, Jesus partook of the cup, then the bread, and then the cup again after the Supper. There was no "authorized" sequential order by which He mandated the order of partaking of the cup and the bread (See Lk 22:17,19,20). His example of order in partaking of the cup was only an example of how He at the time, instituted the Supper.

**We do not have a right to choose from the above institution of the Supper only those incidentals that we wish to bind.** Incidentals that surrounded the event, even things that were done, do not constitute law to be established simply because **they were incidentals that took place at the time.** The point that is emphasized from the above



list of events surrounding the Lord's Supper is that the Bible interpreter must be consistent in his or her approach in the application of Bible examples. **An example of how a command is carried out, therefore, in and of itself, is not binding.** If we get into a contest of picking what incidentals we think are binding, then we will develop an atmosphere that is totally contrary to the purpose of what the Supper is all about, that is, unity that is based on our common remembrance of Jesus.

One should also consider the negative side of the examples of some New Testament disciples. The Corinthian church had its many problems. Among many things, they were involved in lawsuits between themselves (See 1 Co 6), immorality (See 1 Co 5) and division over different personalities (See 1 Co 1). This is why there is no New Testament command that the disciples today should follow all the examples of New Testament as if these examples are binding as law.

**69. T or F:** We must assume that we must follow Jesus in everything that He did.

**70. T or F:** We today must follow every example of how Jesus instituted the Lord Supper when He established it during His last Passover meal with the disciples.

### **3. Examples establish divine truth.**

There are times when an example teaches a significant truth. A good illustration of this is the laying on of the apostles' hands in order to impart the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit to others (See At 8:18; 2 Tm 1:6; see Rm 1:11). In the absence of a specific command for this action on the part of the apostles in order to impart the gifts, we discover a significant truth by noticing the examples of how the apostles accomplished this ministry that was unique only with them.

Though truths are often established by examples, their application as far as obedience to the truth of the gospel is concerned, must be demanded only insofar as there is a command that stands behind the example. Truths are to be believed. Our values and lives are motivated by the truths we believe. Howev-

er, when it comes to obedience demanded by God, **Christians must submit their living to that which is directly commanded by God.** In other words, biblical commandments that demand our obedience for salvation must be derived from direct statements and commands in the Bible. Individual actions and historical events in the Bible do not demand this type of authority in relation to the salvation of the individual. We must understand, therefore, **that direct commands concerning unity have greater weight in Christian fellowship than the examples of the early Christians who sought in their own lives to obey God in their response to the gospel.** For this reason, we must always exalt direct commands above examples. In doing this, we will establish and maintain a better consistency to maintain the unity of the faith.

**71. T or F:** The unity of the church and our obedience to God must always be based on the examples of the early Christians.

### • Inferred Truth •

**What is meant by “inference” are those deductions that we conclude from information or facts that are actually given in the text.** God intended that we use our reasoning power to search the Scriptures (See Rm 12:2), as Paul reasoned with the Jews (See At 17:2; see 24:25). Truth is understood in the Scriptures by a diligent application of one’s mental processes in study of the word of God (See 2 Tm 2:15). **We would correctly assume that the more one studies, the better he or she will understand the Bible.** The more one studies, the more truth one will learn.

This is true because the more one studies, the more he or she can infer from the text the background of activity that was going on when a particular letter or book of the Bible was written. The very foundation upon which inferences are formulated, therefore, **makes them subject to the intellectual abilities of the student.** Such should make us

cautious concerning the application of “necessary inferences” from a particular text in determining that which would be considered fundamental teaching.

**One’s intellectual capabilities, and vast knowledge of the Bible, should not be made the judge and lawgiver of truth among disciples.** We must remember that what one learns from the Scriptures through a process of logic and deduction must not be used to determine fellowship. This is necessarily true because the deductions of different individuals are often different. However, God does expect us to use our intellect in order to discover truth, and especially, better understand the particular texts we are studying. People reason every day of their lives. Therefore, God expects us to be challenged with our reasoning abilities in order to discover the richness of His revelation.

**It is a general rule of literary justice not to make an author say something that he did not expressly state in clear phrases.** We may not infer that the original author is saying something by his use of words or phrases that have numerous shades of meaning. Some meanings may have been entirely foreign to the author’s understanding or intentions when he first used the words or phrases.

**We must first judge a document from what it clearly states in the context of the historical environment in which it was originally written.** We must interpret any document from the viewpoint of the author who wrote it. It is unfair, if not dishonest, to interpret a document from the perspective of our personal agenda or bias today. **It is not honest scholarship to make an author say something he never intended to say.**

We must recognize that God has revealed fundamental and necessary truth for us through clear statements in His word. He also knew that people have a great tendency to “read between the lines,” or to look beyond what is clearly stated in order to discover facts that are in the background environment. Therefore, God not only inspired clear statements

in the Scriptures, He also revealed the teaching of such statements in a way that would challenge the reasoning ability of students to discover truth. This is why the Bible has an appeal as a study book, both to the novice Bible student, as well as to the aged scribe. However, when one studies those things that are inferred from what is actually stated, he or she must be cautioned that one's reasoning is subject to one's own fallibility.

Though the Bible was written to challenge our thinking, we must allow it to speak for itself. We must never make it say something that it does not clearly state. **We must not bind on people those concepts we deduct through human reasoning simply because human reasoning is fallible.** It is for this reason that we must be careful not to construct “systematic theologies” that can be understood only by the educated. **Those things that are necessary for salvation can easily be understood by all Bible students.**

Truth that is deduced from necessary inferences in the study of literature is a common practice in all fields of interpretation. Everyone **infers** something from things that are stated. We approach the Bible in a way to infer from the text those things that are **necessarily** deduced from facts and statements that are given in the text.

It is important to fully understand what God expects of us in understanding the Bible through necessary inferences. God communicated His word to us in a way that would challenge us to learn by inference, and thus be motivated to learn more. In other words, **the more we learn from our studies, the better we can infer what a particular text is saying.** Some would say that this is the practice of “reading between the lines.” The more we study, therefore, the more we can understand the foundation upon which instructions were given to the early disciples. The Bible was written in common literary form by which we communicate to one another on a regular basis. We thus understand in communication what is inferred, and what is necessarily inferred.

- 72. T or F:** The more one studies the Bible, the better he or she will understand the Bible.
- 73. T or F:** If we use our contexts of life today to be the guide to what is meant in a particular text of Scripture, then we are not being fair to what the original authors wrote.
- 74. T or F:** In the area of inferring what a text means, one must always consider the fact that one's fallibility will distort interpretation.

### A. Understanding By Inference

**One discovers truth by inference when he or she logically deducts conclusions from the facts and circumstances that are stated in the text.** An inference is not a mere guess or hunch. It is a logical mental process to discover facts or truth of circumstances that are implied by the statement of particulars in any particular text.

### B. Understanding The Necessary

**A necessary inference is an undeniable conclusion that must be made from the facts and circumstances that are given in the text.** This is not simply a mere inference that would be one's deductive opinion of what the facts and circumstances imply. **A necessary inference is clearly and indisputably implied from the stated facts of the text.** When objectively studied, the necessary inference is the only logical deduction that one can make from the facts or circumstances that are stated.

**It is clear that inferences demand deductions and deductions call for the ability of an individual to exercise logic.** Therefore, this manner by which we study is inherently dependent on the ability of an individual to logically deduct truth from clearly given facts. For this reason, **we would caution ourselves not to make a test of fellowship those teachings that are derived solely from necessary inferences.** This is necessary else we digress to fellowshiping only those people who have the education to deduct truths upon which we would base our fellowship. Also, we must not allow our fellowship to be dependent on a few selected scholars of the Bible who have deducted certain teachings that they may have dogmatized as doctrine.

Because of the differences in individual intellect, maturity and motives, different people will often infer different conclusions. Different people may derive different inferences from the same passage. In other words, an inference may not be a necessary inference. Depending on the background of the students, their deductions will often vary. Nevertheless, God expects us to use our reasoning in order to study His word. He expects us to come to the same conclusion of truth concerning those things that are necessarily inferred from the text. This may not always be possible, but we would assume that honest and sincere students of God's word would come to the same conclusions almost every time.

- 75. T or F:** A necessary inference from a text of Scripture is a truth that is necessarily deduced from the facts that are given in the text.
- 76. T or F:** Those who have a greater ability to logically infer truth from the Bible must be those who esteem as official interpreters of the Bible.

## • Figures Of Speech •

**All languages use figures of speech and idiomatic expressions of communication.** Translators are usually able to bring the figures of speech of Hebrew and Greek into a new language. However, idiomatic expressions are sometimes a little more difficult to translate. Nevertheless, we must understand the uses of figures of speech that are commonly used in language, including the languages in which the Bible was originally written.

Before one can properly understand the Bible, **he or she must clearly understand the use of figurative language.** One of the great errors of biblical interpretation is the literalization of figurative speech that were commonly used by the Holy Spirit in order to write the Bible. This error of interpretation usually results from a failure to identify figures of speech in the text.

Our dictionary is a list of words that we use to define our relationships with one another and the material world. Every definition in this dictionary origi-

nates from our human behavioral experiences. **The Holy Spirit's task in revelation and inspiration, therefore, was to use our defined words in order to explain that which is often beyond this world.** In order to do this, the Holy Spirit had to sometimes use figures of speech, many of which were metaphors.

Since we are confined to the physical world, it is difficult for us to understand that which is beyond this world. We cannot fully understand heaven simply because there are no earthly-defined words that can define heaven that is beyond this world. We cannot fully understand the nature and character of God simply because God is beyond this world. **The God of the Bible is beyond the definition of the words of our dictionary.**

**77. T or F:** It is possible to fully understand God because the Holy Spirit used the words of our dictionary in order to explain God.

**78. T or F:** The only way the Holy Spirit could explain that which is beyond this world was to use the words of our language in a metaphorical to excite our imagination.

### A. Personification

**Personification is a type of metaphor that gives human qualities and experiences to places, things and ideas.** In other words, the emotional actions of man and his human capabilities and nature are applied to places, things and ideas. The places, things and ideas are viewed as living entities that carry out the actions of people. Jesus said, *“Tomorrow will worry about its own things”* (Mt 6:34). Jesus here used a period of time (“tomorrow”) as having a human ability (“worry”). However, days are not living entities that can literally worry.

Paul wrote, *“But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire”* (Rm 7:8; see vss 17-20). Paul personifies sin by making it an entity that would seem to exist apart from man. But sin does not exist apart from the existence of man. However, Paul personifies the word “sin” in **Romans 7** to portray an “entity”

that acts upon him. Therefore, in interpretation, one must be careful not to literalize the meaning of words and phrases that are personifications.

**79. T or F:** A metaphor as a personification attaches human characteristics or actions to that the author uses to teach a truth.

## B. Simile

**A simile is an actual comparison by using the words “like” or “as.”** By using a simile, the inspired writer is trying to help us understand that which is beyond our personal experience by comparing it to something familiar in our experience. Therefore, we must always look beyond the simile in order to understand that which is being signified.

For example, in **Revelation 14:2** John seeks to describe a heavenly picture that is beyond our earthly experience. He does this by using actions of our earthly experience. He wrote that he *“heard a voice from heaven, as the sound of many waters ... as the sound of harpers harping with their harps.”* John was not saying that there are literal waters and harps in heaven. He was simply saying that **the voice** sounded **like** harpers playing on their harps.

**80. T or F:** When a simile is used, the reader must conclude that what is used as a simile is literal.

## C. Metaphor

**A metaphor is a figure of speech that suggests or implies a comparison. One thing is compared to another by speaking of it as if it were that other thing.** In other words, the writer uses those words that explain earthly things to symbolize spiritual truth.

This is the most important figure of speech that is used in the Bible. This is especially true in the efforts of inspired writers to explain that which is beyond this world. It is difficult to understand many key concepts of the Bible without understanding the Spirit’s use of a metaphor.

Through metaphors, the Spirit seeks to explain



God, heaven and eternal actions through things and experiences of our life. This necessitates, therefore, that the biblical metaphors must first be understood in their earthly setting in order for us to understand the rich meaning that the Spirit is trying to convey. **We must, therefore, first understand the literal and actual meaning of the metaphors as the first biblical audiences understood them.** In doing this we can appreciate the message the Spirit is trying to convey through a metaphor.

We must also keep in mind that the metaphor, as other figures of speech, **does not represent itself.** We must look beyond the metaphor to discover its meaning. Too often, interpreters stumble in interpretation by literalizing metaphors. We must move past the historical seat from which the metaphor was taken in order to understand that to which the inspired writer was pointing.

- 81. T or F:** A metaphor is always a comparison between that which is earthly and literal, to that which is above this earth or spiritual.
- 82. T or F:** One cannot understand all that is in the Bible if he or she does not understand metaphors.

The following are two types of metaphors that are commonly used in reference to God:

### **1. Anthropopathisms:**

With the use of a word as an anthropopathism, **God is described with human emotions, passions and desires.** In Genesis 6:6 it is stated, *“And the Lord was **sorry** that He had made man on the earth, and He was **grieved** in His heart.”* Our immediate inclination is to interpret the anthropopathisms here according to their human emotions. However, we must caution ourselves against doing this lest we create a god who is not above our own emotions. Consider also Deuteronomy 13:17: *“So **none of the accursed things will remain in your hand, so that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of His anger.**”* If we understand this human emotion as it is used in reference to God, exactly as we would understand them

in reference to man, then we have created a god that is not above our own emotions. God is not a God of fierceness, as we would be fierce. He is love (1 Jn 4:8).

- 83.** What is the figure of speech that is used to describe God with human emotions?  
 (A) Anthropopathism, (B) Simile, (C) Anthropomorphism, (D) Synecdoche

## 2. Anthropomorphisms:

**This is the assigning of human physical characteristics to God.** For example, God said to Israel, *“I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians ... I will redeem you with an outstretched arm”* (Ex 6:6; see 15:16). The Psalmist wrote, *“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous ... the face of the Lord is against those who do evil”* (Ps 34:15,16). God does not have literal arms, a face and eyes, for God is spirit (See 1 Jn 4:24). A spirit does not have physical features. We create a god after our own likeness when we miss the meaning of the metaphorical anthropomorphism that explains God as having human characteristics.

The Bible is full of precious and rich metaphors. Metaphors as **“sacrifice,” “redemption”** and **“justification”** are used in reference to the Christian’s salvation. Jesus was a **sacrifice** for our sins (See 2 Co 5:21). The literal and actual origin of the metaphor finds its historical setting in the sacrificial lamb that was literally and actually burned on an altar in the Old Testament. However, Jesus’ sacrifice was greater than the Old Testament sacrifices (See Hb 9:23). We have been **redeemed** by the blood of Jesus (See Ep 1:7). One of the historical settings of this metaphor is taken from God’s literal “redeeming” of Israel out of Egyptian captivity (See Ex 6:6). However, our redemption from sin is greater than Israel’s national redemption from Egyptian captivity. The metaphor points us to something greater than the historical event from which it was seated.

- 84. T or F:** Anthropopathism is to describe God who have human physical characteristics.

### D. Synecdoche

In a **synecdoche** a part is used to refer to the whole, or vice versa. For example, in Mark 16:16 the words “believe” and “baptize” stand for all that is necessary to be saved. The action of baptism is used to stand for all that is necessary in order for one to be saved. This would include faith and repentance. Jesus used the word “believe” in John 3:16 in the same manner. “Believe” stands for everything that is necessary in order to have eternal life.

### E. Metonymy

A **metonymy** is the use of one word for another word that it suggests. For example, in **Luke 16:19-32** Abraham said to the rich man, *“They have Moses and the Prophets.”* Jesus did not mean that they literally had the presence of Moses and the other prophets. What is actually meant is that they had the writings of Moses and the Prophets. The figure of the “key” of David that is used many times in the Bible is not a literal key, but simply a metonymy referring to the heavenly authority expressed on earth through the reign of David (See Is 22:22; Rv 3:7; see also examples in Rm 12:1; Ph 1:20).

### F. Hyperbole

A **hyperbole** is an exaggeration to express a truth. Jesus used a hyperbole in Matthew 19:24: *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”* Another example is Luke 14:26: *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother ... he cannot be My disciple”* (See Gn 22:17; Dt 1:28; 2 Ch 28:4; Mt 6:3.) ‘

The figure of a hyperbole must not be taken literally. One must search for the truth that is being expressed by the exaggeration. Hyperbole is used to express a serious truth. In order to express the serious nature of what is said, it is often said with a hyperbole.

## G. Irony / Sarcasm

This is often referred to as **sarcasm**. It is an **expression in which the meaning is clearly opposite to what the words say**. Consider Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 4:8 in the background of those in Corinth who were puffed up and thought they knew all truth: ***"You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us – and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you."*** Also consider the irony of the context of 1 Corinthians 6:3 in view of the same group of arrogant false apostles in Corinth who probably claimed the right to judge angels. ***"Do you not know that we will judge angels?"*** (See examples in Jb 12:2; Mk 15:32.) Again, the irony is not to be taken literally. It is used to teach truth by being sarcastic about the false beliefs surrounding the one being taught.

## H. Euphemism

This is the literary practice of **substituting a less offensive word for another**. Paul used such in 1 Thessalonians 4:13: ***"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep"*** (See also At 7:60). "Asleep" here is a euphemism for death. It is a more gentle word than the word "death."

- 85.** What is it called to use a part to refer to the whole?  
(A) Anthropomorphism, (B) Metonymy, (C) Anthropopathism, (D) Synecdoche
- 86.** What is an exaggeration to express a truth?  
(A) Hyperbole, (B) Metonymy, (C) Simile, (D) Synecdoche
- 87.** What is the expression of a word that is used to refer to an opposite?  
(A) Hyperbole, (B) Metonymy, (C) Irony, (D) Synecdoche

## I. Parable

A parable is **an earthly story that is used to reveal a spiritual truth**. It is a comparative story. We might refer to a parable as a metaphorical story that is used to tell a spiritual truth. Several parables are recorded in the New Testament (See Mt 13). Unfortu-

nately, many assign spiritual truths to every statement of the parables. However, one must be careful not to make a parable mean more than it was meant to say. Also, one must not become so involved in the story of the parable that he forgets the spiritual truth that the parable was meant to convey (See Mt 13:3-23).

One must remember that a parable is a “metaphorical story” that is meant to convey a truth that is greater than the story itself. Details must be given in order to tell a story. However, every detail that is given in order to tell the story is not necessarily meant to be understood to signify some truth. We must seek for the general truth of the metaphorical parable, not become encumbered with the details that were necessary in order to tell the parable.

### J. Apocalyptic / Cryptic

The books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation are in many places written with a literary style of writing called **apocalyptic writing**. In apocalyptic writing, **it is the purpose of the writer to conceal the truth from the enemies of God**. At the same time, **it is the goal of the writer to reveal truth to those who are God’s people**.

Cryptic symbols are often used in this type of literature. **A cryptic symbol is an unreal and horrifying word picture that conveys a message to the reader through the construction of a graphic portrayal of the victory of good over evil**. When one studies books that were written as apocalyptic literature, he must first understand the text figuratively, and then seek literal truths of the text.

**88. T or F:** A parable is sometimes referred to as a “metaphorical story.”

**89.** What Bible books were generally written as apocalyptic literature with cryptic symbols?

(A) Daniel, (B) Ezekiel, (C) Revelation, (D) All the preceding

### K. Other Figures Of Speech

There are several other figures of speech with which one must become familiar when studying the Bible. An **allegory** is an extended metaphor. It gives

a spiritual meaning to a historical event (See Ps 80:8-15; Jn 10:1-18; Gl 4:21-31). A **litotes** is an understatement to give emphasis or a different meaning (See Ps 51:17; Is 42:3). A **meiosis** is a statement where less is said than what is meant (See 1 Th 2:15; Hb 13:17). In an **ellipsis**, or **brachylogy**, a concise or abridged statement omits words or phrases (See Gn 3:22; Ex 32:32; Jn 6:27; 1 Co 6:13; 2 Co 5:13; 1 Jn 5:9). A **zeugma** is the use of two nouns that are grammatically constructed to one verb (See Lk 1:64; 1 Co 3:2). In an **apophysis** the author emphasizes what he wants to say by implying it in what is actually said (See Pl 19). A **paronomasia** is a pun statement (See Mt 8:22). An **oxymoron** combines words or ideas that are opposite (See Mt 6:23).



### ABREVIATIONS OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Ci**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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