

Lesson 5: Sources of Authority

1. This lesson deals with the disciple's belief system and how it impacts his or her life. The issue is **authority**.

The word authority carries with it the idea of supremacy and control. When a decision needs to be made that which is considered to be our authority will determine our actions. For many, the ways of the world have great influence and therefore authority in their lives. According to Romans 12:2, *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,* we are to have our minds transformed in order to do the will of God. At the heart of this issue of transformation is authority.

2. From the following list, rate each thing from 1 to 11 (*1 being the most necessary and 11 being the least necessary*) according to **how necessary each is for making a good decision**.

- ___ Parents
- ___ Knowledgeable but non-Christian friends
- ___ What others are doing
- ___ Bible
- ___ Feelings
- ___ Holy Spirit speaking to you
- ___ Christian writings
- ___ What you want to do
- ___ Godly counselors
- ___ Non-Christian books
- ___ Past experiences

3. Are these listed in the order that **you** use them in making a decision? _____

Consider the following in determining what should inform your decisions:

4. Read Psalm 1:1-3.

Whose counsel should you ignore? (*verse 1*) _____

What should you meditate on? (*verse 2*) _____

Do you think this only applies to *spiritual* things? _____

5. According to Psalm 119:105 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17

How can the Bible help you with all of your decisions?

Ps. 119 It is _____ and a _____

2 Tim. 3 _____

6. There are two ways the Bible helps in decision making. One is to give us **explicit instructions** such as in the Ten Commandments, *Do not commit adultery*. Another way is by **principles**. An example of a principle is found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

Do these verses tell you how much to give? _____

What should be your attitude in giving? _____

The principle here is that you should give unsparingly and with a cheerful attitude. As to how much to give: follow the principle!!

7. There are many pressures on the disciple to make decisions not in keeping with the Bible. That is why you need godly counselors. They will help keep you consistent with the Word. Read Proverbs 11:14.

How many counselors should you have? _____

What is the result of seeking many counselors? _____

8. **Feelings** are a necessary part of our make-up. God has created us with emotions. How we use them will determine their goodness! For instance, assume that you are on the edge of a very steep cliff; to fall would mean certain death. You should feel fear! That fear will keep you from harm—it is God-given.

However, if the Lord instructs you to do something and fear overtakes you, keeping you from obedience, that fear is not from God and should not control your actions! Read Romans 14:23. Faith is the opposite of fear in that faith acts upon the Word of God rather than on the emotion of the moment.

Feelings are very hard to differentiate from God speaking to us. Many Christians believe God is speaking when in fact it is their own emotions in control! That is why we must balance these feelings with the counsel of others, the Word of God, and finally with the circumstances.

9. Read 1 Kings 18-19.

In this account we first see Elijah, the great prophet, calling down fire from heaven to consume the offering and the altar! (18:38). But in chapter 19 Elijah is running in fear of his life.

What was he afraid of?

What words best describe Elijah's emotions:?

___ courageous ___ boldness ___ fear ___ anxiety

___ calmness ___ hopelessness ___ anticipation of good

___ lonely

What did God ask him in 1 Kings 19:13?

God's response to his fear was to speak to him and tell him to go.

What did he tell Elijah to do? (*1 Kings 19:15-16*)

Did Elijah obey? (*1 Kings 19:19*)

10. Elijah obeyed the word of the Lord—not his feelings, nor the circumstances. Everything inside of him told him to run. That is why the Lord asked him what he was doing there. In the midst of our fears and troubles we have God's promise of His presence with us. We are to obey!
11. Elijah considered God's Word to him as his authority and therefore did what he was told. How can **you** know what God wants **you** to do?
12. There are four parts to the puzzle of knowing God's will in any situation. They are: the Bible, godly counsel, circumstances, and the Holy Spirit.

• **The Bible.** Is the action being considered consistent with the Word of God?

I once was told by a member of my Church that the Lord had brought his secretary into his life to give him sexual fulfillment (*he and his wife were fighting a great deal*). Most of us would agree that his belief is not biblical since the Bible is very clear that sex is only proper within the bonds of marriage. But this man's authority had become his feelings; *How could something that feels so good be wrong?* Often we reinterpret the Bible to fit our desires.

If the Bible is not specific about an action then you must look for principles. We discussed this earlier under #6. Here is where godly counselors are very helpful.

• **Godly Counsel.** What do a group of godly people say?

Note two things: *godly*, and *group*. If you are looking for people to tell you that what you are doing, or what you want to do is alright, you are not seeking godly counsel! You want those disciples who are more experienced to help you understand God's leadership in your life. They must be willing to show you biblically why something is correct or incorrect.

We are a **community of faith**. This concept is lost in the American Church. Individualism rules most Christians. A great Christian once stated about modern Christians, "*They just will not be pastored!*" To submit to the body is very difficult for most.

Remember, the concept here is balance. God speaks to us through His Word, the counsel of others, in our circumstances, and the Holy Spirit. If you neglect any one of these, you will be out of balance, and probably in sin!

• **In our Circumstances.** What's happening around us?

There is a balance between faith (stepping out when there seems no place to step) and waiting for the situation to be right. Consider witnessing to an unsaved relative. You know it's God's desire for all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). You know what you want to say. When to say it will be determined by the circumstances. Speaking at the wrong time could bring resistance; but at the right time, salvation. So you wait!

God waited to send Jesus until *the fullness of time* (Galatians 4:4). Even God waited for the right time. Having everything in order is part of God's plan.

Assume that you believe that you should go to Africa to share the Gospel. Is it your desire or God's? Here are some questions that you should consider asking:

- Has God spoken to me? How?
- What are my feelings?
- What does the Word of God say?
- What do other godly people think?
- Is there any group I can go with?
- Is there an invitation to go?
- Who will send me?
- Am I qualified to go or should I get training?

13. Making good decisions is difficult but not impossible. You must settle the issue of authority. In the next lesson we will consider the Holy Spirit's leading in your life.